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General Assembly

Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 21 September 2010, 3 p.m.
New York

Co-Chair: Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki ..... (President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session)
Co-Chair: Mr. Joseph Deiss ..... (President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals

Agenda items 13 and 115 ***(continued)***

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/65/L.1)

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

President Koroma: Allow me to begin this intervention by congratulating Mr. Deiss on his assumption of the presidency at the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and to express sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for organizing this High-level event on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) of the Summit in 2000. This undoubtedly underscores the importance the Secretary-General attaches to scaling up action in the five years that remain for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Exactly 10 years ago, at the Millennium Summit, nations, particularly rich ones, made solemn promises to more than a billion people to address, among other things, the raging poverty and hunger afflicting them; and to improve their quality of life through a renewed commitment to fighting poverty, improving education and health, and protecting the environment in developing countries within a specific time frame of 15 years.

In this statement, I will share with the Assembly: first, the progress my country, Sierra Leone, has made towards achieving the MDGs; and, secondly, the outlook and challenges we face going forward.

When the MDGs were launched, Sierra Leone was engulfed in a decade-long civil conflict. That conflict was an immense setback to human development and virtually crippled the economy. The end of the civil war in 2002 left the State very weak and absent in many parts of the country. Economic and financial management was focused largely on emergency and humanitarian activities. Economic and human development programmes were given relatively limited attention. Consequently, social indicators were worse than at prewar levels. Clearly, Sierra Leone was going in the wrong direction during the first decade of the MDG agenda.

However, since my assumption of office in 2007, we have made considerable progress in consolidating peace and security. We have also focused on consolidating democracy through the electoral process

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and by increasing transparency and accountability. Notably, our sustained commitment and actions aimed at ridding our society of corrupt practices are yielding positive results, as service delivery has improved significantly. Between 2008 and 2009, Sierra Leone improved its ranking on the Corruption Perceptions Index by 12 places.

I believe that achieving the MDGs will be made much easier if the economy is on the right track and the people feel that their lives are getting better. The recent global crisis presented enormous challenges for the robust growth of our economy, but we weathered the storm, achieving a growth rate of 5.5 per cent in 2008 and 4 per cent in 2009. Though this is above the average growth rate of 2 per cent for Africa, it is below the rate necessary to pull our people out of poverty. We are projecting more robust growth this year, which will certainly increase our capacity to overcome poverty.

The Government has demonstrated its commitment to staying the course of sustained macroeconomic stability and enhanced growth with prudent economic policies and wide-ranging structural reforms through its Agenda for Change. The policy sets out the Government's plans for the country's development and prioritizes four strategic areas: enhancing the national electricity system; developing the national transportation network; enhancing productivity in agriculture and fisheries; and ensuring sustainable human development, notably, in the areas of health, education, water and sanitation. As those four pillars address the prevailing weak economic and social indicators, as well as the infrastructure bottlenecks, they facilitate the achievement of the MDGs.

Overall, the conditions for setting up a business in Sierra Leone have significantly improved, owing to an increased effort by the Government to address issues surrounding the business environment, including reform of the business climate. At present, however, poor infrastructure continues to be a major obstacle to private sector growth in Sierra Leone. That is why we are currently developing a national transportation network and a reliable power supply as we transit from a post-conflict situation to development.

However, some of the MDGs and related targets may be missed in Sierra Leone. The rate of progress on poverty, maternal health, child mortality, environmental sustainability and gender equality is still very slow. To address that, we introduced a free health-care initiative for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five. Since we launched that initiative in April this year, there has been an increase of over 70 per cent in institutional delivery and a huge increase in the demand for health-care services by the target group. We believe that this will significantly improve our country's maternal and child health indicators.

However, poverty and illiteracy remain the two main factors negatively influencing achievement of the other MDGs. If the MDGs are to be achieved by 2015, not only should the level of investment be scaled up, but innovative programmes and policies for enhanced economic and social transformation must be further developed and rapidly implemented. In that respect, we must continue to build strong collaborative partnerships between Government agencies and development partners for the development and implementation of programmes that have a significant impact on human development.

The challenges to our achievement of the MDGs are immense, but building synergies represents the best hope for overcoming them and meeting the aspirations for a better life that are embedded in the MDGs. Last week, my country received a Millennium Development Goals Award for showing leadership in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. This shows that, with sustained partnership, the leadership of Sierra Leone can ensure that many of the challenges our nation now faces in achieving the MDGs will be overcome.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Deiss) (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru.

President Stephen: I would like to extend my warm congratulations to you, Mr. Co-Chair, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, and wish you success in leading our deliberations.

We are gathered here today on the tenth anniversary of the historic meeting at which we articulated our collective global commitments to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Despite concerted efforts, the scorecard for the Pacific region, which includes my own country, Nauru, runs a very high risk of not recording the achievement of most of the MDGs. Our region is

among the most vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks owing to many factors, including geographic isolation, small populations and economies, a high reliance on expensive imports, vulnerability to natural disasters, fragile freshwater supplies, narrow resource bases, costly public administration and weak infrastructure.

Those challenges have been exacerbated by recent setbacks, both internal and external, including the impact of the global financial and economic crisis and rising energy and food prices, as well as the mounting problems posed by climate change, sea-level rise and food security, all of which have undermined the socio-economic development of our communities.

Nauru fully subscribes to the view that if the MDGs are to be achieved by 2015, the targets for financial support and investment must be met. Such investment must be targeted to address national priorities. For that reason, Nauru adopted its National Sustainable Development Strategy in 2005. It provides a clear and detailed road map for meeting numerous medium- and long-term milestones, and is fully consistent with, and complementary to, the MDGs. We must recognize and exploit the synergies between bold international development initiatives and the detailed plans created and implemented at the domestic level.

Regarding small island developing States (SIDS) like mine, there are several specific issues that need to be highlighted and addressed.

First, the international community has consistently and formally recognized the special circumstances and vulnerabilities of small island developing States. Yet the level of support provided to the SIDS has not been commensurate with the scale of development challenges that we face. The preparatory work for the Five-Year Review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of SIDS highlighted that those vulnerabilities remain, and progress towards sustainable development for small island developing States is below expectation.

It is now time for a new approach that targets those vulnerabilities. I therefore urge all Member States to support the calls to create a formal category of SIDS that institutionalizes structural support mechanisms targeting those vulnerabilities in the areas of trade and financial support. The creation of such a category is long overdue. The framework developed for the least developed countries can serve as a useful guide.

Secondly, education and public health underpin all the MDGs, and public investment in those sectors is vital. Education is one area in which Nauru has made progress, and we will likely meet our goal of universal primary education. However, we still lack enough qualified teachers to meet demand, and we need new schools.

Improving public health has been a bigger challenge, specifically MDG 6 pertaining to combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Nauru wishes to highlight the importance of addressing non-communicable diseases, which we view to be a development issue and not purely a health issue. Nearly 75 per cent of those in the Pacific region suffer from non-communicable diseases, and it is the leading cause of mortality. The cost and burden of intervention are high for both individuals and health systems, and left unabated will soon become unaffordable. Non-communicable diseases therefore have the potential to overwhelm our social and economic development, as they undermine our quality of life and productivity.

The development of our basic infrastructure has lagged behind investment in health and education and is now Nauru's largest barrier to economic growth. It is difficult to expand our industries unless we have a transportation system capable of delivering our products to market cheaply and efficiently. Economic growth is also necessary to provide employment opportunities for our youth, so that they can develop the skills they need to compete in the globalized economy. Investment in infrastructure can bring immediate economic gains that accelerate progress in other areas.

Of course, climate change and its associated adverse impacts threaten to undo all the progress we have made towards our MDGs and make further development impossible. Although climate change threatens small island States more severely than most, it is not a problem of our own making. I urge the largest emitters to remember the consequences of their behaviour for the most vulnerable.

Right now, negotiations are seriously off track. We have an opportunity to change course this November at the sixteenth Conference of the Parties to

the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Major emitting countries must arrive in Cancun, Mexico, prepared to commit to drastic emissions reductions and to support the adaptation needs of the most vulnerable. Only then will the most vulnerable among us have a chance of survival.

For small island States such as Nauru, overseas development assistance is crucial to making progress on the MDGs and rapidly moving towards aid independence. It has been widely recognized that globally, satisfactory progress towards achieving the MDGs had been made in the past ten years. However, there are real concerns that the recent global financial crisis will cause us to lose these gains.

We cannot afford to allow the recent crisis to lead to another wave of negative impacts on the most vulnerable as a consequence of downward adjustments in official development assistance commitments by developed countries. This short-term savings will only result in higher costs in the long term and more suffering for those who already suffer the most.

Delivering on official development assistance commitments and improving the predictability, effectiveness and modality of disbursement are urgently needed. In spite of the late hour, Nauru is hopeful that the MDGs can still be achieved in every country, but this will only be possible with renewed commitment and effective implementation of national development strategies.

The world has endured much since our last MDG meeting, and I am sure more unexpected disasters — natural and man-made — will challenge us before we reach 2015. Indeed, the consequences of the economic events of recent years serve to remind us exactly why achieving the MDGs is imperative. As we approach the deadline for the Goals we set for ourselves, let us rekindle the spirit of the Millennium Summit and fulfil our promise to improve the lives of the people we serve.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda.

President Kagame: We gather here today to reaffirm our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and to agree on a practical way forward for accelerating their achievement by 2015. We currently have a great deal of momentum behind this agenda, which we must individually and collectively seize, as I firmly believe these goals can be realized.

However, to do so, we must first reflect upon whether our values and underlying beliefs are consistent with the Goals we have espoused and the many commitments we have made. If we do not examine the assumptions underlying these laudable aspirations, we will struggle to achieve the MDGs, despite our best efforts.

The truth is that the political and economic environment we operate in today has dramatically changed and, in many ways, is unrecognizable from when the MDGs were established a decade ago. The financial downturn in developed economies, the increased pressure on poor nations to compete in an era of globalization, the growing influence of new partners to the East and South, and the challenges posed by climate change, which disproportionately hurt the poor, are changing the context we all operate in.

We need to ensure that we are having a discussion for today's and tomorrow's reality, not yesterday's. Meeting the MDGs must remain the international priority, notwithstanding our ever-changing circumstances, and not just because it is fashionable at the moment.

This concern is compounded by the fact that the debate on the MDG agenda has, at times, been dominated by a few voices, primarily from the developed nations and affiliated non-governmental organizations. Despite their good intentions, their perspective is often predicated on paternalism, not partnership, on charity, not self-reliance, and on promises unfulfilled rather than real change on the ground.

We, in the developing world, also could do more. We need to reflect deeply on how we have driven this agenda so far, and why we are lagging behind in achieving the targets. We can no longer rely on the goodwill of other nations — we neither need to, nor should want to. We must assume effective leadership, take full ownership of the development of our countries and truly deliver for our citizens.

We need to continue to promote greater empowerment and health for our women and girls so that they change the context in which they live and grow more deeply involved in poverty alleviation programmes.

We should also embrace the transformational power of technology and in particular give our people increased access to broadband, which has the capacity to enhance their social and economic development. We can do this, and much more, if there is more regional cooperation. That is why I wish to encourage greater South-to-South dialogue and economic cooperation. The agencies mandated to foster development in our regions need to work together more and more, not only to share best practices, but, crucially, to empower the nation States of the South so that our vision and energies may deliver the MDGs.

The lessons of the last 10 years have shown us that even when the resources are available and action plans are adopted, progress has sadly been too slow. We must foster new working relationships, and adhere to values that are informed by homegrown priorities and owned by local leaders; that empower our citizens and enable communities to work productively; and that balance our history and cultural heritage with innovation and social progress. These values must be embedded in the political and economic culture of our countries, of the United Nations, the regional development banks and bilateral relationships.

Let me conclude by reiterating my belief that the MDGs are attainable. We have ample evidence that where Governments own their development, where real partnerships between supporters and supported occur, and where the agenda is designed and executed by the people for whom it is intended, tangible results are obtained and livelihoods are improved. But, at the end of the day, we shall only achieve the MDGs if we ensure that our values are consistent with the promises we made and reaffirm them during this important Summit.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Deiss) (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Sheikh Sharik Sheikh Ahmed, President of the Transitional Federal Government of the Republic of Somalia.

President Ahmed: First, I would like to congratulate the President on his assumption of the presidency at the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and, through the President, to express sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for organizing this High-level event on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) of the Summit of 2000. Here I would like to stress that when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were launched, Somalia was in a civil war; and, eventually, that civil war developed into something even worse. Now, the Somali Government and people are witnessing a conflict unique in the world, where a group of terrorists is not only hindering peace in Somalia but also preventing Somalia from participating in these Millennium Development Goals. It is therefore the position of the Somali Government that we need this august Assembly, and the international community in general, to really help Somalia to overcome the difficult situation Somalia finds itself in, and to free it from the troublesome terrorist organization that is holding it back.

As the Assembly knows, Somalia has very promising potential in terms of development, but first we must get rid of these groups that want to keep the country in a state of war, violence and isolation. Then Somalia can be a part of the Millennium Development Goals, and I believe that with the efforts of the entrepreneurial Somali people and the determination of the Transitional Federal Government we will catch up with the other members of the international community. I would therefore request that the friendly nations of the world help us to truly defeat this manifestation of terrorism, which not only affects Somalia but also the region to which it belongs, as well as the entire world — because, as we know, terrorism has no borders. What we are therefore struggling to do is to stop this phenomenon in Somalia, with the help of the international community, so that a peaceful Somalia will be able to participate in the Millennium Development Goals.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Dominican Republic, Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna.

President Fernández Reyna (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government and people of the Dominican Republic, we extend our greetings to the members of this United Nations Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), on the occasion of the 10-year anniversary of their official proclamation. These goals were eagerly taken on by the

Dominican Republic and other nations around the world because they provided clear guidelines and deadlines with respect to ways for reducing poverty, promoting education and health, fostering gender equality and guaranteeing sustainable development.

In the specific case of the Dominican Republic, since the early 1990s, which is the reference date taken to establish the Millennium Development Goals, our population grew by 35 per cent, from 7.2 million people in 1990 to 9.7 million people today. The gross domestic product increased from approximately $22 billion to $53 billion, which is the same as saying that, during that period, the Dominican Republic's economy expanded more than two and a half times. To put it in economic terms, in 2009, the Dominican Republic was two and a half times bigger than in 1990.

During the same period, the Dominican Republic had one of the best performances in terms of growth of gross domestic product in Latin America and the Caribbean, with an annual growth rate of an average of six per cent.

Despite these substantial growth rates, however, it is unlikely that the Dominican Republic will achieve a 50 per cent reduction of its poverty rates during the next five years in order to reach the goal set for 2015. There are several reasons that explain the difficulty in achieving this objective.

First, a domestic financial crisis took place in 2003 in which many banking institutions were seriously affected. As a consequence of this domestic financial crisis, the economy declined by 0.3 per cent, our currency was devalued by more than 100 per cent, inflation rocketed to worrisome levels and the unemployment rate rose from 13 to 19 per cent.

In that context, poverty ended up increasing instead of decreasing, and it was not until 2005 that our national economy began to regain its dynamism and social indicators also started to improve. From 2005 to the present day, extreme poverty decreased by 5.5 per cent and overall poverty declined by nine points.

However, while we were trying very hard indeed to overcome the domestic financial crisis, we were seriously affected by the oil and food crises. The increased cost of oil and a subsidy established to prevent increases in food prices diverted resources that would normally have been available to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals.

The third factor that had a negative effect on the possibility of achieving the MDGs was, of course, the global financial and economic crisis, which began at the end of 2007 and which is still present and has led to the slow, fragile growth of the global economy.

Finally, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters stemming from global warming have also left their mark and limited the resources originally provided to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Thus, as we can see, it is not for lack of political will or lack of planning and accountability that the Dominican Republic will be prevented from achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 as planned. Instead, that is the result of unforeseen circumstances, both nationally and internationally, which have become obstacles on the country's path to achieving the desired goals, which means, therefore, that we need to double our efforts and design new strategies for sustainable development and growth, as we are doing in the Dominican Republic towards 2030 in order to generate well-being and prosperity for our population.

However, we should not lose sight of the fact that the future holds daunting challenges when it comes to reducing poverty in the world, derived from the increasingly visible phenomenon of interdependence in the global economy as well as the speculative nature of many financial and commercial transactions. We reaffirm our national commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and we harbour the hope that the United Nations system will continue to play a dynamic and active leadership role in the design of a new global financial and economic order that is fairer, more equitable, more based on solidarity and more in favour of the world's poor.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon.

Mr. Bongo Ondimba (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to welcome this meeting which is part and parcel of the extension of the 2005 World Summit at the end of which we reaffirmed our full commitment to the Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2), the foundations of a more peaceful, more prosperous and fairer world (see General Assembly resolution 60/1).

We are gathered here today, five years later, to again take stock of our actions in favour of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Despite genuine progress noted in the implementation of these Goals, the deadline of 2015 remains for a great many countries, including Gabon, a very difficult challenge to meet in an unfavourable international financial and economic environment.

I would like to speak about my country with a sense of humility and realism with regard to the numerous obstacles that we must overcome to the MDGs. That does not in any way have any bearing on our desire to accelerate our development by relying on our potential. From the very outset, we have been in a position to strengthen and perpetuate what we consider to be the principal basis of development, that is, peace and stability. Since our accession to independence, this asset has always been a distinguishing characteristic of our country in a region that has been marked by crises and recurrent conflict. This climate of peace and stability enabled us to achieve progress in the fight against extreme poverty and in favour of education, the promotion of women, the fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases, maternal health and the preservation of the environment.

As far as the reduction of extreme poverty is concerned, we have already taken a number of important steps aimed at preserving the purchasing power of households by increasing income and improving social protection. We are referring to increasing transport subsidies and back-to-school benefits and raising the monthly minimum wage to $320 and the adoption of a law aimed at setting up a family benefits regime for economically weak Gabonese households. Indeed, these vulnerable individuals now enjoy pensions paid by the national social security and health insurance which enables them to seek low-cost treatment in accredited hospitals. To these measures we must add the adoption of a national programme on food security, which includes a nutrition plan aimed at relaunching the agricultural, livestock and fisheries sectors.

With respect to education, we have made substantial investments, as demonstrated by the national education budget, which has increased from about $130 million in 2004 to about $204 million this year. The State also established a mechanism to assist young people throughout their primary, secondary and higher education studies. Gabon's primary school enrolment rate is among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, at close to 96 per cent today, and almost with gender parity. The literacy rate among the people of Gabon is over 85 per cent.

We have also made progress in promoting gender equality and empowering women. Indeed, in addition to creation of a ministry tasked with supporting women, a number of steps have been taken to promote the gender issue. Today more and more women gain access to health care, education and microcredit, as well as positions of responsibility in public administration, the army and other decision-making bodies. One of the most tangible examples of this trend was seen during the last political transition in my country, during which two remarkable women played outstanding roles — one as head of State and the other as President of the Constitutional Court.

In the field of health care, we have continued our efforts to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases with the assistance of our partners, including the World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund. Today the number of patients with access to antiretroviral therapies has increased. We have increased the number of campaigns to raise prevention awareness throughout our national territory through a partnership that we were able to establish with civil society actors, United Nations agencies and the private sector. These efforts have contributed significantly to reducing new infections and to improving the conditions for caring for those who are ill.

With respect to reducing infant mortality and improving maternal health, we have drawn up a national road map whose main benchmarks are contained in the text of the new national health policy, recently updated and now being adopted by the Government. These new steps align with prior actions undertaken by the Government within the framework to implement the national morbidity reduction strategy and to reduce neonatal maternal death.

Reducing infant and maternal mortality is vital to the development of African countries. Here I would like to echo the appeal launched by Africa at the Kampala summit, which was that no woman should die in giving life. The Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health to be launched tomorrow by the

Secretary-General, and to which my country fully adheres, is a praiseworthy initiative. We are convinced that implementation of this strategy will enable us to mobilize resources, to strengthen health care arrangements for women and children and to fight unequal access to care.

With respect to preserving the environment, Gabon has reserved 11 per cent of its territory for the creation of national parks as a contribution to global efforts in the area of the environment and to fight global warming. Since my accession to the presidency, I have committed myself, through the Green Gabon programme, to promote the green gold of Gabon by mechanizing the timber sector and conserving the ecological riches of our huge equatorial forest that is so necessary for our development. I have taken steps to strengthen protection of national parks to ensure, inter alia, greater protection of our exceptional biodiversity, and I have launched a broad campaign against the illegal extraction of national resources, which today is very successful.

I have also taken a number of other significant steps aimed at reducing our carbon dioxide emissions and increasing the level of carbon sequestration in our forests. It is well known that Gabon enjoys environmental stability, and that has been confirmed over time. As long as we preserve our forests, we will be more or less assured of minimizing the impact of climate change in our country.

However, today we are living in a global village where challenges have become transnational. Faced with these challenges, we must pool our efforts to carry out a collective struggle. Gabon is part of our global village, and as part of this village it is firmly committed, with the United Nations and other Member States, in the fight the world is conducting today against climate change.

The impact of the international financial crisis on public investment to support basic social needs such as education, health care, access to drinking water and electricity has constrained our endeavours to improve human development. Aware of those difficulties, I have, since my accession to the presidency, committed to building a new Gabon based on the pillars of a diversified economy, good governance, promotion of human capital and major construction. The goal is to put the country to work and to ensure rapid and sustainable economic growth whose fruit will enable us to better distribute the revenue. The three pillars — payment, development, sharing — that underlie my social agenda illustrate well the new programme that I plan to implement to improve our people's well-being and add Gabon to the list of emerging countries.

Our efforts on development will be effective only if accompanied by mobilization of sufficient resources and a large increase in direct investments. To that end, my country encourages current efforts aimed at institutionalizing innovative financing mechanisms for development. To that end, an effective global partnership for development will prove indispensable to ensure sustained economic growth in our countries.

I cherish the hope that the Outcome Document that will crown our work (A/65/L.1) recognizes the crucial nature of resource mobilization in accelerating the process of implementing the Millennium Development Goals. I view this Meeting as a new opportunity to send a strong sign to humanity, one commensurate with the commitments made in Monterrey, Doha, Gleneagles, Paris and Accra in favour of a genuine global partnership for development.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Lieutenant-General Salou Djibo, President of the Supreme Council for Restoration of Democracy, Chief of State and President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of the Niger.

President Djibo (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to associate my voice with those have spoken before me from this rostrum to extend to the President my warm congratulations upon his outstanding election to preside over our work. It gives me all the more pleasure as I am firmly convinced that his broad experience will ensure that our work will lead to both concrete and realistic results.

In the Millennium Declaration of 2000 (resolution 55/2), the international community committed itself to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Those Goals, which enumerate a set of quantifiable targets, aim at reducing extreme poverty and eradicating hunger, while also imposing the obligation to promote quality education, create jobs, improve health and sanitation policy, fight environmental degradation and give special attention to the promotion of women and children.

However, 10 years later — as is apparent from the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/665) — the results of the implementation of steps to achieve the MDGs remain mixed.

As far as Niger is concerned, everything currently seems to point to the fact that it is most unlikely that my country will achieve the MDGs by 2015. I see at least two reasons for this. First, despite their admittedly significant efforts, our development partners were not able to meet commitments made, notably in the matter of official development assistance. Secondly, the heavy impact of the vagaries of the climate on the national economy, the insufficient economic growth and the rise in population lead to perennial food insecurity and a failure to meet basic social needs.

This situation, far from being temporary, reflects the extreme precariousness of our system of production and indeed the precarious situations and living conditions of our people. Furthermore, the global economic, energy and food crises of 2008 and 2009 have had a heavy impact on our operational capacities. Faced with that situation, Niger has launched economic and public finance reforms in the framework of developing budget programmes tailored to the MDGs.

In turn, the United Nations system, under the leadership of the United Nations Development Programme, has already launched two pilot initiatives aimed at accelerating progress in achieving MDGs. I refer specifically to the MDG Acceleration Framework — the MAF — and the initiative for promoting local ownership of MDGs. I therefore urge the international community to more effectively assist the implementation of those initiatives for the good of the people of Niger. Allow me here to state that Niger was selected as a pilot country for the MDG local ownership initiative; however, it is not yet one of the countries selected for the MAF.

Following the food crises of 2005 and 2010, which affected nearly 50 per cent of the population, and the harmful impacts of climate change — especially the advancing desert and torrential rainfall, which make agricultural production unpredictable in a country where more than 80 per cent of the population rely on agriculture — this gathering here affords Niger an occasion propitious to the establishment, with our partners, of a new social and economic partnership that, I hope, will fulfil its promise.

A strategy for accelerated development and poverty reduction was adopted in 2007. Its main axis is the development of the productive sector, will enable us to lay the foundations for sustainable development, which will no doubt contribute to accelerating our move towards achieving the MDGs. Priority steps, defined in the framework of assessing needs and costs of the MDGs, address agriculture and food security, education and training, gender equality, health, water and sanitation, natural resource management, roads and transport, social protection and improved access to energy.

In Niger, the overall cost of achieving key MDG targets over the period from 2011 to 2015 is approximately $21 billion. The contribution of the State of Niger, according to this assessment, is estimated at $5 billion, representing an average annual participation of $1 billion. To mobilize those resources we have at the national level developed a strategy for the mobilization of internal resources based on improving the level of taxation through an expansion of the tax base, strengthening financial regulation and more rigorous tax collection. Public expenditure reforms underway also stand to release potential resources. Likewise, additional resources are expected from mining and oil exploitation planned from 2011.

For its part, the international community must continue its efforts to assist Niger, with technical and financial participation on the order of $16 billion over the period in question. What we need is rapid and substantial financial support, which will enable us to profoundly transform the structure of our economy with a view to creating a diversified production base, more capable of incorporating our country into the global economy.

For our part, we commit to attending to a number of issues. These include budgetary increases in priority sectors, notably health, education and agriculture, in keeping with the Abuja Declaration of 2000, as well as access to and availability of quality reproductive health services, products and advice, including about HIV/AIDS, to all women of childbearing age. We commit also to containing population growth, fighting violence against women, restoring and enforcing the rule of law, and to individual liberties and freedom of expression. We commit to democracy, good governance, the culture of peace and the fight against terrorism. All of these goals also represent necessary conditions for all social and economic development

and therefore for the achievement of the MDGs and the fulfillment of our people.

These values are so important to us in Niger that the draft constitution to be submitted for the approval of the people of Niger this 31 October enshrines the protection of the health of women and children, the fight against all violence directed at women and the implementation of the national declaration on population policy.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon.

President Biya (*spoke in French*): Since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 10 years ago, an assessment of the ground covered shows that although significant results have been obtained, the achievement of all the MDGs by the year 2015 remains uncertain. The United Nations and the African Union note that while Africa, to mention only that continent, has made remarkable progress towards achieving the MDGs, the pace and even the quality of the results obtained have not given cause for optimism but at best only for cautious satisfaction.

I wish to pay tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the insight afforded by the reports published by the Organization in preparation for our work. I also avail myself of this opportunity to hail the common African position, which should remind us all that Africa is only the continent that may not achieve the MDGs by the agreed-upon date.

The merit of our gathering today is that it affords the representatives of the States Members of the United Nations the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to accelerating the achievement of the MDGs by 2015.

My vision of the MDGs is based today on three aspects that I consider essential for their achievement: the attainment of Goal 8, which concerns the implementation of a global partnership for development; access to energy; and job creation.

The complementarity among the MDGs, no matter how pertinent, should not make us lose sight of the fact that there is one Goal on which the achievement of all the others depends, and that is Goal 8. Indeed, the efforts to mobilize resources for development depend on establishing a more equitable economic and financial system, on dealing comprehensively with the debt problem, on providing official development assistance that is consistent, predictable and effective, on access to essential medicines and on reducing the digital divide. If together we succeed in rising to these challenges, which are the targets of Goal 8, I am sure that all the others will stand a chance of being achieved.

The second factor that I believe indispensable for the achievement of the MDGs is access to energy. There is no doubt today that energy resources have a multiplier effect on the achievement of the Goals relating to poverty reduction, education, health, gender and the environment.

Energy resources facilitate not only increased agricultural production but also water supply and the development of income-generating activities for the poorest segments of the population, especially women. Experience further shows that access to energy favours the institution of quality education, while facilitating the spread of new communications technologies. It is also worth recalling that energy has a role in boosting girls' access to education by reducing their household chores.

The benefits of access to energy are also seen in maternal and child health, thanks to improved monitoring of pregnancies and of conditions for deliveries, as well as improved storage methods for vaccines and medicines. Furthermore, using modern sources of energy directly impacts not only the health of women who no longer have to inhale smoke and gas from biomass, but also the preservation of the environment, since it helps to check forest destruction and the encroachment of deserts.

Lastly, we cannot reasonably expect to achieve the MDGs without addressing the challenge of employment. Indeed, more than ever before, employment is a determining factor in alleviating poverty and fostering personal dignity and in collective well-being, sustainable economic growth and, unquestionably, political stability. Hence achieving the MDGs will necessarily hinge on resolving the employment crisis, in particular the issue of youth employment, since young people represent not just the bulk of our population but also the future of our countries.

In order to factor in the three elements that I have just presented, and conscious of its responsibilities towards its people, the Government of Cameroon has

prepared and is gradually implementing its growth and employment strategy paper. That document is a blueprint centred on developing productive sectors and infrastructure, without which improving the living conditions of our people is unthinkable.

In this light, the Government has established, inter alia, a programme to develop the energy sector. This programme provides for upgrading existing infrastructure and building new hydroelectric dams to meet industrial and household needs. Through this programme, Cameroon should be able to double its production of electric energy by 2015 and triple it by 2020, while giving pride of place to the growth of renewable energies.

Other actions in the same vein are under way, including the adoption of Cameroon's vision for long-term development by 2035, aimed at making Cameroon an emerging country, pursuing fiscal reform that includes incentives and improving the business climate with a view to further mobilizing domestic savings and attracting foreign direct investments, and lastly, increasing our capacity to absorb foreign aid.

To conclude, Cameroon wishes to affirm its faith in a united and indivisible human community able to act in unison in what in the final analysis is a global idea, namely, the well-being and the fulfilment of all of its members.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Zenawi (Ethiopia): I wish at the outset to express my appreciation to you, Mr. Treki, outgoing President of the General Assembly, for the good work he has done and to assure the incoming President of the Assembly, Mr. Joseph Deiss, of my country's readiness to contribute to making his term of office a success. It is with great pleasure that I pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, among other things for convening this historic High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General could not have been more to the point when he said in his report that "the Millennium Declaration represents the most important collective promise ever made to the world's most vulnerable people" (*A/64/665, para. 5*), then adding that

> "This promise is not based on pity or charity, but on solidarity, justice and the recognition that we are increasingly dependent on one another for our shared prosperity and security". (Ibid.)

Only five years away from the target date of 2015, it is not clear that we have enough justification for a sense of accomplishment with respect to that most important collective promise. No doubt, there has been some progress and some parts of the world are on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In Africa too, although progress has been uneven and has been negatively affected by the current economic crisis and unusual levels of climate variability, a number of countries are on a promising trajectory to achieve most if not all of the Millennium Development Goals. But the overall picture in the continent in terms of achieving the Millennium Development Goals is far from reassuring.

It is therefore clear that we need to do more and better than we have so far if we are to make up for opportunities lost over the years. There is no doubt in my mind that we in the developing world have to do more and better to take charge of our destiny, to design programmes and strategies appropriate to our circumstances and to mobilize our own resources as the primary means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

I know that this is easier said than implemented, all the more so because much of the external assistance we get has in practice been predicated on our towing the line of the donor community rather than charting our own independent course of action. The fact remains, however, that there is no possibility of us keeping our promise to our people unless we do more and better to take charge of our destiny and unless we depend on our own resources as the primary means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

It must be clear, however, that as much as those that are vulnerable assume full responsibility for their development and maximize domestic resource mobilization, there are nonetheless structural realities that make it unavoidable for them to rely partly on international solidarity to make progress in development, including in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This is obviously the rationale behind the Goals. It was clearly understood right from the outset that progress towards achieving the Goals,

particularly by the most vulnerable, hinges on effective international solidarity and support.

Our partners in development need to do more and better to deliver on their promises to provide quality support for development and for achieving the Goals, as they have clearly been off track in delivering on their promises, in terms of both the quantity and the quality of the support they promised. They need to go beyond empty words and put their money where their mouth is if we are to have a realistic chance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the target date.

It is for all those reasons that this High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly is so vital. This forum should result in a new pact with respect to a renewed commitment to ensure that the collective promises made at the dawn of the new millennium are kept. What we need are action-oriented recommendations designed to ensure accountability for commitments and promises made. The coming five years ought to be used in such a way as to make up for some of the opportunities lost over the past decade.

We in Ethiopia have made substantial progress on all fronts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We have taken full charge of our destiny, devised our own strategy and maximized the mobilization of our domestic resources to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We made the best use of the limited available international assistance to supplement our own efforts. We made sure that all our development plans were consistent with achieving all the Goals.

The results so far have been very encouraging. Over the past seven years, the Ethiopian economy has performed well, having achieved an 11.6 per cent annual average growth rate. The robust economic growth we have achieved has created the basis for similarly robust growth in social indicators and hence on progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

We have now developed our plans for the next five years, which are based on the progress we have made so far and are intended to help us achieve all the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. We are keenly aware that our goals are ambitious and that they may not be achieved without significant external assistance. But we are determined to do what we can on our own, while seeking support to supplement our own efforts. The achievements of the past seven years give us the confidence to move forward, with a realistic chance of achieving all the Millennium Development Goals in time.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): Only five years remain before the target date of 2015 that we set for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Those Goals were and still are noble and lofty ideals and aspirations. We believe that in the remaining time, the eight development goals we set for ourselves can still be achieved.

Looking back at the road we have travelled over the past 10 years, the results of our efforts have been mixed. It is true that significant progress has been made in opening up access to education, to clean water and to gender parity. But the war against poverty, hunger and disease is yet to be won. We need to put more effort into implementing policies that will accelerate our progress towards meeting all the MDGs.

The developed countries must live up to the commitments that they have made with regard to official development assistance. Equally, we, as developing countries, must do our part by devoting resources to the areas that are necessary for social and economic growth. More resources are needed to finance education, agriculture, infrastructure and health-related commitments. I would like to acknowledge those development partners that have extended a hand to help Lesotho meet its commitments in these critical areas. In this regard, I am pleased to mention Japan, the Peoples Republic of China, the United States of America, the Republic of Ireland and the European Union member States, among others.

Available data indicate that Lesotho is on track to meet the goal of universal primary education because of the policies that we introduced for free and compulsory education at that level. We are also on course to achieve the targets set for the goals of gender equality and of access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The Lesotho Government has, in addition, put in place legislative and physical infrastructure to ensure that these gains are sustained and not reversed.

The scourge of HIV and AIDS remains a major challenge for Lesotho. HIV infection continues to outstrip the expansion of treatment. It has imposed immense pressure on our national resources in terms of loss of economically active manpower, treatment and care for the sick, and support for orphans.

We have not been an exception to the status quo in Africa, where maternal and infant mortality rates are the highest in the world. It looks certain that we shall fall far short of the target for these goals. Our attempts at making high-impact interventions have been constrained by poverty and limited financial resources. It is clear, however, that with sufficient political will, the right policies and the support of our development partners, these trends can be reversed.

The Millennium Development Goals are all interrelated. The achievement of most of the MDGs will be dependent on our success in addressing the health-related challenges that our countries face. It is in this context that, at the African Union summit in Kampala in July this year, the African heads of State and Government decided to significantly increase their investment in the health of their peoples and to adopt policies that will put an end to the spectre of high maternal and infant mortality rates in Africa.

Lesotho hopes that the recent global economic and financial crisis that affected all countries will not be used by our development partners as an excuse to reduce their support to help the developing countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Like other countries of the world, Lesotho was adversely affected by the crisis. The inflation rate reached double digits for the first time in years, and unemployment increased from 23.6 to 29 per cent. This is just an indication of the enormity and severity of the global crisis, which affected all sectors of the economy. It is therefore clear that, in the remaining five years, we shall have to dedicate a lot of resources, both human and financial, to scale up our efforts to cut by half the population living below the poverty line.

It is indeed important to note that Governments cannot tackle this mammoth task single-handedly without the participation of the private sector. To this end, Lesotho has created an enabling environment and Government structures in which the private sector has been made a partner in the development efforts of the country.

Climate change has emerged as one of the most serious challenges that we have faced in Lesotho in recent times. Like all developing countries, we bear a disproportionate share of the adverse impacts of climate change, even though we are not responsible for it. Household food security is under serious threat as a result of severe droughts and unfavourable weather conditions caused by global warming. This has affected the majority of our rural population that relies heavily on subsistence farming. In particular, the nutritional status of children and other vulnerable groups is often compromised.

We appeal therefore to industrialized countries to deliver on the promises which they made in Copenhagen last year to assist developing countries with the necessary technology and resources for adaptation to and mitigation of the impacts of climate change. In our view, this will be an interim measure as we work towards putting together a binding global agreement for reducing global warming, which we hope to have in Mexico at the end of this year.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by Her Excellency Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar (Trinidad and Tobago): I am very happy to bring greetings from the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I am grateful for the opportunity for us to take stock of the progress and the pitfalls in our drive towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We are a small island developing State of twin islands. We have attained middle-income country status. We are fully cognizant of the fact that we remain vulnerable to international financial, food and energy crises, as well as natural disasters. These vulnerabilities are not unique to Trinidad and Tobago, but affect the Caribbean and a large percentage of the Commonwealth States, of which I have the honour to be the present Chair-in-office.

With respect to poverty eradication, we recognize that the passport out of poverty is through education, community empowerment and social entrepreneurship. Consequently, we are re-engineering our strategies to achieve those MDGs that require greater efforts. We have put decisive measures in place for strong capacity-building and for partnerships with regional

and global agencies to achieve equal success with the other MDGs by 2015.

Fellow leaders will be happy to learn that, within five years, every secondary school student in my country will have a laptop computer in his or her school bag, the first set of which is being delivered this year for all students entering the secondary school system.

More than a decade ago, when I had the opportunity to serve as Minister of Education of our Government, we introduced secondary education for all. That was initiated well in advance of the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education. Today, I am proud to say that we have not only achieved the goal of primary school education for all, but surpassed it. We continue to increase access to education and provide assistance for our people to become lifelong learners.

In the area of tertiary education, UNICEF statistics for 2009 reveal that 46 per cent of persons aged between 17 and 21 are enrolled in our tertiary sector. We believe that that percentage increased this year because we saw increased enrolment in the tertiary sector just a couple of weeks ago. That was the result of a programme that we introduced, known as Dollar for Dollar, which was subsequently renamed Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses, providing full Government funding of students in tertiary education.

Notwithstanding our advances, we see the United Nations and other multilateral agencies, including the Commonwealth, as critical partners in overcoming challenges in the areas of the other MDGs. We recognize that we have to work harder in order to ensure that we achieve our stated goal to reduce poverty by 2 per cent per year.

Some 16.7 per cent of our people still live below the poverty line; 11.7 per cent are considered the working poor, and 9 per cent are deemed vulnerable. With those groups in mind, as a new Government, we have established a new ministry — the Ministry of the People and Social Development — that is unique in our political history and whose aim is to bring the Government closer to the people in a delivery-centred manner that deepens the partnership between the Government and the people.

In order to support our goals of poverty alleviation and poverty reduction, 20.5 per cent of this year's budget for the upcoming fiscal year has been allocated to the delivery of social services. Only last week, in our budget debate, we announced that the Government would raise the minimum wage from 9 to 12.5 Trinidad and Tobago dollars per hour, bringing the minimum daily wage to 100.

We are committed to partnering with the people. Too many of our poverty reduction programmes fail because of an inability to connect, consult and collaborate with those in need. Our leadership policy is to listen before leading. That facilitates the empowerment of our people. As a consequence, issues such as gender mainstreaming have not escaped our attention.

We are very concerned about the equal place of women and girls in our society. At the tertiary level, women now fill more than 60 per cent of classroom space; 28 per cent of our parliamentarians are women; and 25 per cent of local Government practitioners are also women. At the University of the West Indies, there was a 51-per cent increase in the enrolment of women in tertiary education between 2003 and 2009, whereas male enrolment increased by 32 per cent. That said, we are very concerned about the growing trend of the marginalization of male youths in Trinidad and Tobago.

With respect to health issues, our concern for human development is reflected in our commitment as a Government to the needs of our children. We believe that children are our future. Since my Government assumed office in May, we have launched the Children's Life Fund to provide emergency medical care and surgery to children for those medical procedures that cannot be accessed in Trinidad and Tobago. We have also pledged financial assistance to my adopted homeland, Jamaica, for a similar fund there. At the level of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), we have agreed in principle to initiate a pan-Caribbean Children's Life Fund. In that regard, we would welcome the nations of the world and international organizations such as UNICEF partnering with us in that noble initiative.

The health and well-being of our people is a high priority for our Government. We will spare no effort in the fight against infant mortality and in improving maternal health, as evidenced by our provision in this year's budget for milk money for low-income mothers.

Time will not permit me to elaborate on the numerous strategies we are pursuing to ensure the well-being, protection and care of children.

With respect to health and HIV and AIDS, we need to confront the realities. However, in addition to that, in our region non-communicable diseases, especially diabetes, hypertension and heart disease, are prevalent. The emergence of non-communicable diseases as a major threat to socio-economic growth can only roll back the progress made towards the achievement of the MDGs. We have also developed indicators for measuring and treating them. To that end, Trinidad and Tobago, in collaboration with CARICOM, successfully spearheaded resolution 64/265 calling for a high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases, which will take place next year.

As I close, I want to indicate that we share the global anxiety for the environment. We have established our own green fund, which will be used for reforestation, environmental conservation and preservation. Three months ago, in partnership with the private sector and non-governmental organizations, we launched the Clean Up and Beautify programme, involving communities throughout the nation and aimed at the sustainable management of the environment.

In conclusion, I say that there is only one goal for our Government, and that is the happiness of our people. There are many things that divide us — race, religion, old grudges and territorial disputes — but the one thing that should unite us in the world community is our resolve to be our neighbour's keepers in the face of natural disasters and other humanitarian crises. We must cross all barriers, political or otherwise, to initiate a unified and coordinated global response wherever such challenges may occur. No nation should be left to stand alone.

Trinidad and Tobago will continue to work with the United Nations and other entities in our steadfast resolve to achieve all the MDGs.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Harper (Canada) (*spoke in French*): We thank the Secretary-General for having convened this summit. The Millennium Development Goals set benchmarks that enable us all to measure our collective progress towards building a better future for those on our planet most in need. They eloquently express our conviction that nations must work together for the good of all. Written goals are a good start, but it is our actions that really matter.

(*spoke in English*)

As we speak of the Millennium Development Goals, it is critical that our words here today ultimately translate into simple realities, such as food on the table, improved health and a better life for children around the world. Together, we must keep our promises and work towards practical, durable solutions.

At this summit, our discussions should be less about new agreements than accountability for existing ones; less about lofty promises than about real results; and less about narrow self-interest in the name of sovereignty than about an expanded view of mutual interest in which there is room for all to grow and prosper. As we move forward, we must also develop and sustain that shared sense of responsibility, and demonstrate that responsibility by being accountable. Canada has a clear, open and transparent record, and we are proud of what we have accomplished.

(*spoke in French*)

After the Group of Eight summit (G8) last year, we doubled our support for agriculture development. We now have a comprehensive food strategy that commits us to concrete action. We have untied the strings that used to be attached to food aid. We doubled international assistance. We doubled aid to Africa. And we have forgiven more than $1 billion in debt owed by the poorest countries in the world.

(*spoke in English*)

Most importantly, we have established clear priorities for aid. We are focusing on three things: food security, children and youth, and economic development, so that we can ensure our aid dollars are used more efficiently. In turn, that means a more focused and effective effort in reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

As host of this year's G8 summit, Canada introduced a new tool to measure aid effectiveness. For the first time, an aid accountability report was presented to G8 leaders. Leaders agreed to this because we all know that it is not enough for nations to make

promises. We must get results. We must all be held accountable. And people in the developing world must see that we deliver on our word.

Ten years after the Millennium Development Goals were written, much remains to be done, especially when it comes to reducing child mortality and improving maternal health — Goals 4 and 5, to be exact. It is a sad reality that each year hundreds of thousands of mothers die in pregnancy and nearly 9 million children die before their fifth birthday. It does not have to be this way. Progress is possible, but only if we are all willing to take collective action.

At this year's G8 summit, together, leaders agreed to enact the Muskoka Initiative for maternal, newborn and child health. We are mobilizing support from G8 and non-G8 leaders, key donors and private foundations. Together, it is anticipated that we will mobilize more than $10 billion over five years. The Muskoka Initiative will save millions of lives and make a significant, tangible difference in the lives of the world's most vulnerable people.

(*spoke in French*)

And to make a real difference in the lives of vulnerable people is the purpose of the Muskoka Initiative. Accountability for results will be an integral part of the plan. Our rigorous accountability framework will make it possible to measure progress, monitor results and ensure that funds intended for aid really contribute to a reduction in the mortality of mothers and children on a lasting basis. By working together and tracking our results, we really can save millions of lives.

(*spoke in English*)

To that end, I am further pleased to announce that Canada will continue to contribute to the struggle against some of the world's great killer diseases. We will be increasing our replenishment of the United Nations Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria for the years from 2011 to 2013.

In closing, we donor nations must deliver on our commitments. As we work towards the Millennium Development Goals, we must be focused, we must be pragmatic and, above all, we must be accountable. If we stay the course, then and only then will we see results — measurable improvements, such as better nutrition, better health care for children and longer lives for people in the developing world. These are results that we and the world need so desperately.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Orette Bruce Golding, Prime Minister of Jamaica.

Mr. Golding (Jamaica): My delegation joins in congratulating Mr. Deiss on being elected to lead the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly and for his chairmanship of this important High-level Plenary Meeting. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon deserves our commendation for his initiative in convening this very important Meeting.

It is clear to my delegation that we are in danger of failing to achieve the targets that we set for ourselves at the Millennium Summit 10 years ago. Ten years on, almost 1.5 billion people still live in extreme poverty and more than 1 billion suffer from hunger.

In the race to 2015, many developing countries were lagging behind even before the global economic crisis. The reasons for that are many. Inadequate investment in human resource development has left us with weak productive capacity. This, together with an international trading system that treats us as equals when we are not equal has rendered us more consumers than producers, more importers than exporters, sustaining jobs elsewhere instead of creating jobs for our own people.

Our mounting indebtedness pre-empts the limited resources that we have. We are thus not able to devote adequate resources to education, training and infrastructure — all necessary requirements for investment, job creation and sustained development. Not only is access to financing limited, but the cost of borrowing is expensive because we are perceived by our circumstances to be risky borrowers.

In our efforts to achieve our Millennium targets, we have increased as much as we can our social welfare programmes, but this, in a sense, is illusory for it is done at the expense of more self-sustaining development initiatives. Real achievement in the reduction and elimination of poverty is to be measured not by the number of people kept out of poverty because of fiscal cash transfers, but by the number that escape poverty without the need for such programmes. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) must

therefore be seen as a development imperative, not merely as statistical targets.

Much more detailed attention must be paid to the adverse impact of the global crisis on the efforts of struggling developing countries to meet the Millennium targets. Most of us are among the least resilient, with no surpluses to mount countercyclical stimulus initiatives. Many of the gains we made through considerable effort and sacrifice have been reversed. For many of us, it is as if we must start all over again. The slow pace of the global recovery suggests that it may be some time before we will get going again.

This is not the only setback we have suffered since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals. The increasing impact of climate change and the costs associated with measures we have had to adopt to counter international terrorism have constrained our progress towards the attainment of these goals.

What does this mean for us in terms of fulfilling the goals that we set 10 years ago? It requires more than just stock-taking. It requires more than merely appealing for a redoubling of effort.

Make no mistake. Without an emergency programme to re-energize the MDG agenda, those targets will remain elusive in 2015 and beyond. The fiscal policy requirements attached to the resources that have been made available to developing countries through institutions like the International Monetary Fund are contractionary. They cannot assist us in meeting our targets in the short-term. A way must be found through more concessionary loans and grants and debt-for-equity swaps for the channelling of resources and the fiscal space to support programmes for economic development, empowerment and capacity-building. The global partnership for development, aligned with MDG 8, must be reinvigorated.

We well appreciate the constraints facing developed countries as a result of the recession. Yet, we urge them not to renege on or postpone their commitments to overseas development assistance. If these commitments were needed at the time they were made, they are needed even more now. But we need even more than that. We need an institutional framework with innovative provisions calibrated towards enabling developing countries to accelerate their development momentum. We need the process to be time-bound to create the necessary sense of urgency. We need clear guidelines established for its implementation and vigilant monitoring, and without excessive bureaucracy. But let us do it; let us make things happen rather than let things happen to us.

I raise an issue that escaped specific attention in defining the Millennium Goals. Crime and violence are proving increasingly to be an obstacle to the attainment of the Goals. This is not just a law-enforcement issue, but a development issue, and is correlated to issues such as poverty, levels of investment and competitiveness, and job creation. Local crime and violence is linked to the large international network of organized crime, making it a matter of global, not just domestic concern. We urge that this issue be tackled within the context of the global partnership for development, and we urge its incorporation into the existing MDG framework.

Jamaica continues to appeal for special consideration to be given to small and vulnerable economies like our own, which are classified as middle-income countries and therefore not considered eligible for certain concessionary and development financing. In the Caribbean, a hurricane lasting but a few hours can set the country back 10 or 15 years. And it does. A sharp decrease in tourism, such as occurred immediately after 9/11, can devastate an entire economy that depends as much as 60 per cent on tourism for its growth. It is simply not fair for us to be treated as well-advanced towards economic security when the possibility of a major catastrophic setback is never far away.

Before I close, let me briefly report on Jamaica's progress towards achievement of the MDG targets, despite all the difficulties with which we have had to contend. We have made substantial progress towards universal primary education. Our challenge is to improve the quality of that education and to deal with the underperformance of our boys, which is extremely worrying to us. We support the incorporation of secondary school completion rates into the assessing of MDG 2, given the post-primary dropout rate, particularly among boys, and the susceptibility of that group to anti-social pursuits.

We are on track to achieve the MDG 6 targets. Through assistance from the Global Fund, we have significantly increased access to antiretroviral drugs and reversed the rate of HIV/AIDS infection. However, our recent reclassification as an upper middle-income

country renders us ineligible for further assistance from the Fund. We do not have the resources to fill this gap and therefore run the risk of a reversal in those gains. Again, we urge that the treatment of countries based on income classification be reviewed to take into account a country's level of indebtedness and its fiscal capacity to finance programmes that are taken for granted in respect to middle-income countries.

Like many other countries, we have experienced a significant increase in poverty as a result of the global recession, from 9 per cent to 16 per cent in the past two years. Recovering lost gains will depend to a great extent on the pace of recovery in the global economy, as well as the possibility of special initiatives within an emergency programme for which I have appealed.

The Caribbean Community has proposed that non-communicable diseases be treated as a discrete target within the MDG framework, given their inextricable link to mortality. We are particularly pleased that the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/265, which supports the convening of a high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases in 2011, which we hope will be fully supported by the international community.

I believe that we must face the harsh reality that, with only one-third of our time remaining, the MDG targets are in real danger. The setbacks we have suffered are real. We will not achieve these targets if we proceed at the same pace as the first 10 years. Renewed commitment, backed by new strategies, is required. We can make up that growth; we can overcome the setbacks that have beset us in recent times, but it will require much more than business-as-usual; it will require a new strategic emergency approach.

My appeal is not just to altruism and benevolence. A disguised, but inescapable truth is that the surest way to secure global prosperity and economic stability, as well as global peace and security, is to enable all countries and all peoples to contribute to and share in this prosperity. That must be the ultimate Millennium Development Goal. This Meeting must secure and demonstrate that commitment, and it must demonstrate the action that that mission requires — the action that will enable us to declare to the next generation that the mission, despite all difficulties, has been accomplished.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Ould Mohamed Laghdaf (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a great honour to stand before this Assembly and to present, on behalf of the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, a progress report of our country's march towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session and wish you every success. I thank your predecessor, Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for his hard work and his excellent management of the previous session. My thanks and appreciation also go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his valuable efforts to achieve the objectives of our Organization and strengthen its role in the maintenance of international world peace and security.

While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are optimistic and ambitious, they can only be achieved if we adopt parallel programmes to improve the infrastructure in terms of roads, electricity and in particular transportation. In a vast country such as mine, simply opening a health centre or educational facility or establishing projects to combat poverty in a remote part of the country is not sufficient. We must also supply electricity and build passable roads leading there, taking into consideration the lifestyle of our nomadic citizens and the fact that production areas and marketing and consumption areas are not necessarily the same.

Bearing this in mind, the electoral programme of the President of the Republic, Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, besides encompassing all the MDGs, was designed to reflect the realities and meet the requirements of development in our large, desert country, where most of the population lives in rural areas. Thus, we focused on conceiving and implementing ambitious programmes to pave roads and build health centres and schools in remote and poor areas. Special efforts were required to connect those areas with the rest of the country and enable their inhabitants to access the basic services that ensure them a decent living.

These ambitious programmes elicited praise from our development partners at the round table in Brussels this past June. From the outset, their implementation took into account the priorities of our country in fighting poverty and improving social and security conditions for our citizens. This was reflected in, among other things, the provision of decent housing and necessary social services for thousands of citizens who used to live in poverty and were marginalized in shanty towns in the capital and other major cities.

Achieving the MDGs requires the fulfilment of two basic conditions, the first of which has to do with the States concerned, the developing countries themselves, which have to adopt coherent policies based on managing resources, fighting corruption and setting priorities, such as poverty reduction, food security, education, health and the construction of basic infrastructure. Managing our resources and fighting bribery and the misuse of public money have enabled us to achieve tangible results. The considerable funds released can be spent on the construction of a number of vital social facilities, such as schools, health centres and roads.

The second basic condition is the fulfilment of obligations by the donor and developed countries, particularly the allocation of 0.7 per cent of their national income to developing nations. Here, we note with satisfaction the announcement by some States of their firm intention to fulfil their obligations and to search for new and innovative funding.

At the same time, we ask for a review of the procedures for disbursing and allocating foreign funding, with particular emphasis on support for consumption capacity, ways of expediting the implementation of projects and support for the budget of the beneficiary country. The current procedures often cause delays in project implementation.

Despite the current situation, we expect to achieve some of the MDGs by 2015, relying first on our own resources and secondly on the help and support of our development partners. We can affirm that all poor districts of the capital Nouakchott will be provided by the end of the year with electricity, and we are launching major projects to provide 74 per cent of the urban and rural population with potable water by the year 2015. Numerous health programmes have in fact been started over the past two years, including building hospitals and health centres for the treatment and care of pregnant women and newborn babies, as well as wide-ranging campaigns to vaccinate children under the age of five and to eliminate deadly diseases like malaria and tuberculosis. These projects will bear fruit, we think, before the MDG deadline. We have also made considerable progress in improving school enrolment rates and gender equality in basic education and will intensify our efforts in this area, where we are confident that we will be successful.

Because Mauritania is threatened by drought and the rapid encroachment of the desert, together with the impact of various environmental factors associated with sustainable development, we have launched in recent weeks a national programme to combat desertification. The first phase of this programme, funded by private sources for the State, includes the introduction of a green belt to protect the capital and its social and economic infrastructure through the planting of a million trees over the next two years. Similar projects in other major cities of the country will follow.

Mauritania has benefited from the support of its brothers, friends and partners in working to achieve the MDGs. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them and encourage them to continue to strengthen and expedite this cooperation.

In conclusion, I hope that our current meetings will lead to the formulation of recommendations and suggestions to help us fulfil our commitments and achieve the MDGs, thereby benefiting humanity as a whole.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Heinz Fischer, President of the Republic of Austria.

President Fischer: It is my privilege to address this High-level Plenary Meeting on behalf of Austria today. The Meeting provides a unique opportunity for us to strengthen our partnership and collective efforts to reach the Millennium Development (MDGs) by the target date 2015. While fully aligning myself with the statement of the European Union, I would like to offer some additional reflections.

The Goals represent the very best of United Nations ideals, ambitions and efforts to establish a fair, prosperous and secure world for all. On the one hand, they are the most important collective promise ever

made to the world's most vulnerable people. On the other hand, they represent an internationally agreed framework of quantified and time-bound targets which are an excellent tool for addressing the most pressing issues of extreme poverty, hunger and disease, and for promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability.

During the past decade, a number of countries and regions have achieved major successes in combating extreme poverty and hunger, improving school enrolment and children's health, expanding access to clean water and HIV treatment, and controlling malaria, tuberculosis and neglected tropical diseases. This has been achieved in some of the poorest countries, demonstrating that the Millennium Development Goals are indeed achievable with the right policies, adequate levels of investment, and international support.

Still, much remains to be done. Challenges are most severe in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, countries that are vulnerable to natural hazards and countries affected by conflicts. The global financial and economic crisis had a negative impact on countries to various degrees. With declining resources, donors need to focus even more on goals and regions where the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals lags behind.

Until 2015, the target date for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, Austria will concentrate its efforts on the following sectors where we have gained particular expertise: energy and the environment, water and sanitation, and peace and security. By focusing on these sectors, we intend to contribute to the implementation of all Millennium Development Goals, especially the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

The current assessments of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals conclude that there is a need for better inclusion of the most vulnerable in the development process. This means, first of all, the inclusion of women and girls, the most neglected and the first excluded population groups worldwide. Advancing gender equality and empowering women is a precondition for poverty reduction, sustainable economic growth and social development, since women are important agents of change within their societies. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of entire families and communities and to improved prospects for the next generation.

The fate of women affected by armed conflicts and their role in peacebuilding processes continues to be among the priorities of Austria's policy in development cooperation. Implementing the objectives of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security in the daily work of the Security Council remains a priority during our non-permanent membership of the Council. Furthermore, Austria adopted a national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in August 2007. The plan calls for specific measures in the framework of Austria's humanitarian, diplomatic, peacekeeping and development activities.

Finally, allow me to highlight the needs of people with disabilities, who belong to the most vulnerable group in general, and in development processes in particular. It is my firm belief that we need to increase our attention to this group.

One of the most persistent obstacles to development is the lack of transboundary infrastructure in the areas of energy, water, telecommunications and transport. I should therefore like to emphasize in particular the need to overcome extreme energy poverty, which makes life so difficult for many people. I strongly support the Secretary-General's global campaign to ensure universal access to energy for all people on Earth by 2030. We cannot hope to reach the Goals if 2 billion people continue to lack access to electricity or other energy services for basic needs and for productive uses.

I am convinced that a collective effort on a global scale and the commitment of donors to the Millennium Development Goals, together with the intensified efforts of developing countries and the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and other international stakeholders, will contribute to bringing developing countries back on the path of sustainable economic and human development. I know that all of us, including my own country, have a great responsibility, and that we will assume it.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will how hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Jean-Max Bellerive, Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Bellerive (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): Now that we are entering the critical five last years to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is appropriate, in the light of the situation in Haiti, to pause briefly to analyze the path covered over the past 10 years and that which remains before us.

All are now convinced of the importance of the MDGs as tangible development indicators for any given country. However, they do not tell the whole story of the development efforts of that country, nor do they necessarily reflect some very important progress towards stability, which is a sine qua non for any sustainable development.

Since 2004, Haiti has enjoyed a certain measure of stability. That is no small thing and should not be overlooked. I firmly believe, however, that Haiti's standing does not reflect our full reality, much less our potential. We should, perhaps, have played the game better and invested our scarce resources in certain aspects of development that would have relatively improved Haiti's score and projected a different image.

I should also like to stress the fact that reaching the MDGs is a shared responsibility, although we understand that the countries concerned should exercise leadership and to assume the primary responsibility to attain the Goals. They can do so, however, only with enlightened and consistent international support over time that reflects the priorities of developing countries. They cannot do so without genuine respect for the historic and cultural patrimony and development choices of each country concerned.

Haiti was deeply scarred and bore the full brunt of the fruit of a decade of poor development choices and an uncertain international context. What can Haiti do alone when year after year the howling winds of hurricanes year push tens of thousands of families further into poverty? What can Haiti do alone when struck by an unprecedented tragedy, such as that which occurred on 12 January? How, in such an environment, can we raise Haiti out of the vicious cycle of increasing vulnerability that deepens poverty, prompts thousands of Haitians to flee their unendurable situation by land and sea, and provokes instability that discourages investment? In brief, how can we give our Government the capacity to play its due role in reversing the situation?

The situation is far from desperate, however. On the contrary, this is an almost unique opportunity for us to escape from the vicious cycle of poverty and enter a virtuous cycle of reducing vulnerabilities, investing in sectors that generate employment and growth, and providing basic social services.

The tragedy of 12 January showed, as if it needed demonstrating, that Haiti's development will require a true reorganization, promoting harmonious development between the capital and the provinces and giving the districts the means to play a more important role in their own development.

On 31 March in this very city, we launched a special appeal through the Action Plan for the National Recovery and Development of Haiti. Our appeal was well received and significant funds were pledged. However, these pledges have not been fully translated into additional funds that would allow us to shift gears and adequately cover all the major programmes that await financing. Our Action Plan creates the guidelines for making strategic choices, and we have insisted on the importance of giving Government the means to fully play its role, failing which it can merely be an observer of events on its own territory.

The commitment of President Clinton and numerous other partners seems now to herald a better understanding of the need for more coordination and transparency. The Interim Haiti Recovery Commission is a unique in this regard, but it is only temporary. We must therefore make the most of this period in order to prepare the foundation for a permanency that can be found only in national bodies, within ministries, the Parliament and the districts, together with a civil society that is vibrant and involved in major national choices.

The contribution of non-governmental organizations is indispensable and welcome in that regard, and will continue to play a major role. But that contribution cannot permanently substitute for that of the State. The credibility of the State is at stake, and hence the effectiveness of its institutions.

For its part, the Haitian State continues to work to improve the predictability and level of resources it can ask of its citizens, even though a great deal remains to be done. It is also essential that the same predictability be associated with the financial commitments for the reconstruction of Haiti. In this regard, there is still a lot of ground to cover. For example, today the

Government of Haiti has only a very approximate idea of what has been spent by humanitarian agencies. We have requested that information, but the responses have been few and partial. That is not acceptable.

Furthermore, it is also extremely difficult to know the real amounts available to development agencies, be they multilateral, bilateral or other. What amounts could be reprogrammed? How much is available to them in terms of additional funds? These are crucial questions, and they are the keystone to coordination and efficient efforts. I therefore call on the international community to share information better, which is the basis for true dialogue. Without that, there will be no national ownership, which may translate into short-term, ephemeral effects, and Haiti will not only not progress in its efforts to rebuild the country and attain at least some of the MDGs, but it will regress.

As I have said previously, we cannot envisage such a scenario. Haiti can and must change its image as an unstable, rudderless country and become a country that is proud of its past and believes in its future. Our success will be that of the international community, and will extend far beyond the borders of our country and shed new light on the realities of development and the ability of the international community to keep its promises.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by His Highness Sheikh Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my honour to convey to the Assembly the greetings of His Highness, the Emir of the State of Kuwait, and of the Government and the people of Kuwait. I congratulate you, Sir, on presiding over this High-level Plenary Meeting to review the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are certain that your wise leadership and good conduct will contribute to fulfilling our shared objectives.

I would also like to express our thanks and gratitude to Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who presented a comprehensive review of the successes achieved to date, the desired goals and the reasons for the delay in achieving them in his report entitled "Keeping the promise: a forward-looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015" (*A/64/665*).

At the historic Millennium Summit held at the dawn of this century, our heads of State and Government issued a long-term programme and road map for achieving the noble development goals of the neediest peoples of the world. That programme was a beacon and a guiding light that lit the path towards achieving those goals.

Five years ago, world leaders met at the first MDG Review Conference, and everyone then felt optimistic. The indicators were encouraging and the statistics showing the range of responses by States, particularly the least developed and those most affected in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, spurred enthusiasm and determination to exert further efforts and commit to moving ahead on the road to attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

However, this Meeting, an important opportunity to revisit the Millennium Development Goals, has been dominated by discouraging indicators, especially for Goal 1 relating to the halving of global poverty and hunger. This situation poses a real challenge to the international community as it seeks to fight the twin scourges of poverty and hunger. Rather than fall, the number of poor people rose from 800 million in 1990 to more than 1 billion in 2009.

It is therefore imperative to uphold the previous commitments, particularly those made by the developed countries in the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance.

Since our last conference in 2005, the world has witnessed enormous crises and challenges, such as the increase in food prices and the oscillation of energy prices. These were followed by a suffocating financial and economic crisis that has threatened the global economic system and the political and social stability of some States. While all States without exception have suffered the effects of this crisis, its impact on the developing and least developed countries has been more severe, despite the fact that these States were not responsible for it or its root causes.

We welcome the steps taken and the policies adopted by a number of international and regional groupings to confront this crisis, ease its impact and prevent its recurrence. However, we must do much more to help the global economy to recover and to achieve a fair and balanced international trade system.

One of the other serious challenges our world faces, and one that we should confront with a joint and unified effort, is the phenomenon of climate change and its impact on all aspects of life, from economic and trade activities to the environment, the ecosystem and biological diversity. Over the past few years, the world has witnessed an increase in the number of natural disasters, which have become more severe and destructive because of climate change. These disasters have caused enormous losses of life and property, as in the case of the destructive earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010 or the floods that swept Pakistan last month. We hope that we will be able to agree on a legally binding document at the upcoming conference scheduled for December 2010 in Cancun, Mexico, which must spell out the steps, policies and responsibilities required on the part of the developed and developing countries in order to limit the effects of climate change and to enable developing countries to adapt to its consequences.

Despite the fact that these difficulties have hindered the efforts and limited the abilities of numerous States to achieve the MDGs, we agree with what was mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/445) to the effect that achievement of the Millennium Development Goals on time remains feasible, given the necessary commitment, policies, resources and effort.

Therefore, we view this meeting as an important opportunity to renew our commitment and our determination to shoulder our responsibilities, fulfil our obligations and mobilize our energies for a better world, where the gap created by disagreements, divisions and conflicts fed by the absence of justice and equality can be narrowed while the horizons of cooperation and partnership are expanded, and where peace and security prevail.

In this regard, we wish to emphasize that the United Nations remains the most credible, legitimate and neutral multilateral mechanism there is and the best place to discuss ways and means to reach joint collective solutions to global challenges and hazards.

The State of Kuwait believes that the development goals the world seeks to achieve by 2015 are attainable. There are positive signs that support this conviction, such as the improvements in school enrolment rates and child and maternal health, the increase in access to clean water and the progress made in combating serious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

All these advances and positive results require constant and prompt efforts in order for us to maintain and consolidate them, particularly in the face of the numerous challenges the world faces. A high percentage of the world's population in certain regions still suffers from poverty, hunger, serious diseases, increased rates of unemployment, illiteracy and displacement. This is in addition to the negative effects of armed conflicts and foreign occupation, the perils of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, the spread of transnational organized crime, the illegal drug trade, the spread of terrorism and violations of human rights. All of these difficulties pose, together, a real threat to international peace and security and an obstacle to achieving the desired sustainable development.

The State of Kuwait is actively seeking, with all the means at its disposal, to achieve the MDGs and to improve the welfare of Kuwaiti citizens. Kuwait's economic and social development indicators have surpassed the targeted averages and rank high both regionally and internationally, according to reports by United Nations agencies concerned with human development.

Currently, unified efforts are being made and all available resources mobilized to implement the national development plan for 2010-2014. The estimated cost of the plan is about $115 billion. It is an ambitious plan that seeks to advance all the State's sectors, improve infrastructure and raise the level of education and health care services, as well as to set Kuwait on a path to becoming a financial and trade centre for the region.

As the State of Kuwait continues its assistance to developing countries, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development continues to support and finance development and infrastructure projects in more than 100 countries, with a total value of almost $15 billion, making the median amount provided double the percentage of gross national income agreed upon internationally for official development assistance. The State of Kuwait wishes to renew its commitment to continuing to provide development and financial assistance to States in need in order to help them achieve stability and progress and to advance their capacities to fulfil their own development needs.

We recognize the tremendous international responsibility and the difficulties and challenges that stand in the way of many countries in their efforts to accomplish the MDGs and achieve their purposes. We are, however, convinced that those goals are achievable if supported by political will and total belief in the importance of joint and collective work, as well as by our adherence to the resolutions we take and the commitments we make. Let us all work together for the good, the dignity and the welfare of our peoples, guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and by profound respect for international law.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Treki) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Stephenson King, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia.

Mr. King (Saint Lucia): Ten years ago, we met and agreed on a set of actions documenting our collective responsibility for ensuring that we lived in a world that was more equitable. We developed indicators and set targets, which at this point we must assess.

Saint Lucia is among those nations that adopted the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. As we assess our progress and the commitments we made, let us not forget that our promises were made on the basis of certain assumptions about our surroundings. We now know that these assumptions were flawed, for within that period of time we have had oil price shocks, food, health, and financial crises, major natural disasters and — very fundamental to small island developing States — a worsening global environment through climate change. In spite of these challenges, we have not abandoned our tasks. In fact, we are even more committed to achieving or getting close to our goal by the designated dates.

For us, achieving the MDGs by 2015 was an undertaking and commitment to work together for the betterment of mankind. However, the first eight pages of the Secretary-General's report (A/64/665) tell the story of how much remains to be done globally if we are to get near the targets in 2015. It tells us that we must undertake a comprehensive review of progress and together chart a course for accelerated action on the MDGs between now and 2015. Let me give a brief synopsis of Saint Lucia's progress towards these goals.

Immediately after their adoption, Saint Lucia embarked on a process to localize the MDGs. The benefits of that exercise were twofold. First, it ensured that the national policies were consistent with and supported by the global framework, and secondly, it facilitated the development of a national framework in which the targets and the indicators, as well as the monitoring and reporting systems, are relevant and adapted to national needs and capacities. A multisector working group/task force, coordinated through the Ministry of Social Transformation and comprising players from key sectors, was responsible for preparing the report on the MDGs. The current status of each of the Goals is outlined as follows.

Regarding MDG 1, on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, the main quantitative indicator of extreme poverty — people living on less than $1 per day — is not applicable to Saint Lucia. Currently, the data indicates that our poverty level increased from 25.1 per cent in 1995 to 28.8 per cent in 2009, but that the indigence level decreased from 7.1 per cent in 1995 to 1.6 per cent in 2009. The Government is currently involved in a number of programmes, initiatives and institutions that are primarily dedicated to reducing poverty; improving access to public services; developing skills in order to enhance employability; providing access to credit; providing support services to micro-businesses; distributing funds for the benefit of poor, needy and disadvantaged persons, including scholarships to students; and increasing access to and the quality of basic economic infrastructure and services among vulnerable communities and groups.

Regarding MDG 2, on achieving universal primary education, universal primary education has been in place in Saint Lucia since 1980, and September 2006 marked the formal inauguration of universal secondary education. While Saint Lucia has achieved both universal primary and secondary education, the commitment of the Government continues to be high as it works to improve the quality of education through improvements in teacher training and in school conditions.

Regarding MDG 3, on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, eliminating gender disparity in access to education is not entirely relevant in Saint Lucia, as that was achieved long ago. There is, however, a need to mainstream the gender dimension in all aspects of development. There is an acute need to systematically address issues of gender-based violence

and other forms of discrimination against women. On the other hand, there are a number of critical issues regarding male marginalization and other problems affecting young men which need to be urgently addressed.

MDG 4 relates to reducing child mortality. Child mortality rates are higher than the target set by the MDGs. Saint Lucia continues to pursue of a vision of universal primary health care and the attainment of this MDG. This involves a radical departure from the system of curative medical care to a system of preventative care and health promotion.

Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname), Vice-President of the General Assembly, took the Chair.

Turning to MDG 5, on improving maternal health, maternal health is better than in most developing countries and surpasses the MDG target. At present, 98 per cent of births are attended by skilled health professionals and 96 per cent of women benefit from prenatal care.

MDG 6 concerns combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The Saint Lucia National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2004-2009, launched in February 2005, is the guiding framework for the country's response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Efforts are being made to improve both reporting and surveillance systems. Malaria is no longer present in Saint Lucia, and other communicable diseases are generally under control. However, diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart conditions and cancer continue to be of concern, and wellness programmes are being developed to bring these under control.

MDG 7 relates to ensuring environmental sustainability. To ensure sustainable use of natural resources, a number of policies and programmes have been developed and implemented. These are geared towards addressing the sustainable use and management of marine, terrestrial, coastal and atmospheric resources. Saint Lucia is signatory to a number of regional and international environmental agreements. Noteworthy is the Liliendaal Declaration on Climate Change and Development signed by the States members of the Caribbean Community.

On MDG 8, concerning a global partnership for development, Government policies in Saint Lucia have always promoted partnerships through subregional, regional and international organizations. We have a very open economy and facilitate direct foreign investment, as well as ensuring that official development assistance funds are properly accounted for.

Considerable progress has been made by Saint Lucia towards the attainment of the MDGs. Moreover, the prospects for achieving the Goals by the target year of 2015 remain positive and give reason for optimism. Nevertheless, it has been recognized that there is a need for a more systematic approach in mainstreaming the MDGs into the national development agenda. The MDGs ought not to be regarded as an end in themselves, but as a means to an end. It must be remembered that many of the Goals and targets were set at their lowest entry points and that, at the time of adoption, many countries were above the threshold. The challenge for counties like Saint Lucia was to ensure forward and upward movement to a level where poverty would be a thing of the past.

I would like to emphasize that progress towards the MDGs will be of little consequence if development gains are not lasting. The developed States should promote broad-based economic growth by helping counties formulate and implement pro-growth policies, promote trade, invest in infrastructure and stimulate entrepreneurship.

All of that will be useless if we cannot get the major players in the global-warming scenario to reduce their emissions and at least return stability to environmental degradation.

There should hence be renewed political commitment to achieving the MDGs and the establishment of a global action agenda for accelerating progress toward the Goals. Let us be resolute in our efforts to move forward and adopt and put in place policies and programmes that will enable us to keep moving towards a better world for all.

The Acting Chair: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Waheed, Vice-President of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Waheed (Maldives): Today marks the forty-fifth anniversary of my country's joining the United Nations. Over the past 45 years, the United Nations, other international organizations and friendly countries have helped Maldives to achieve enormous progress. For that I would like to thank them today.

I could stand here and say that the Maldives is progressing well towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). I could explain that the Maldives has already achieved five out of the eight MDGs ahead of the 2015 deadline, making it South Asia's only MDG-plus country. I could talk about our achievements on poverty eradication, primary education, reducing child mortality, ensuring maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

However, I prefer to use the opportunity provided by today's high-level event to give participants a sense of the enormous challenges that the Maldives faces in continuing and consolidating its positive trajectory. Tragic events like the 2004 Asian tsunami remind us that progress towards the MDGs should never be taken for granted. Improvements and successes that have taken years to accumulate can easily be put into reverse unless we remain vigilant and prepared to respond to such extreme events, natural or man-made.

The Maldives faces three broad horizontal challenges and a number of challenges specific to certain MDGs. First, in parallel with our socio-economic drive towards the MDGs, the Maldives is also struggling with the political imperative of consolidating democracy and integrating the concepts of human rights and the rule of law into our national consciousness. We are not unique in this. All countries in transition experience an inherent tension between the past and the future, between those segments of the population that benefited from, and would prefer a return to, the old system and those parts of society that are impatient for real change and a fairer, more just society.

This underlying tension, coupled with related challenges such as the rise of religious extremism, has important implications not only for democratic consolidation but also for our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. That is because the Government's approach to development is premised on empowering the people and giving them the freedom and opportunity to build and better their lives. Promoting human rights, decentralization of the government and administration, privatization and redistribution: those are the foundations of Government policy. But such policies are also a clear threat to the powerful vested interests that once controlled the country.

Secondly, linked with the country's political challenges is the unfortunate fact that the Maldives is struggling to consolidate democracy and the rule of law at a time when the macroeconomic situation remains precarious. This was caused by extravagant spending by the former Government in the run-up to the 2008 elections, coupled with the after-effects of the tsunami and the onset of the global financial crisis.

In consultation with the International Monetary Fund, the Government has taken a wide range of steps to confront this problem. The outcome of those efforts will determine the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and our people's broader development aspirations. For example, pressures on the national budget are already having a negative impact on the health and education sectors.

A third broad development challenge facing the country is our impending graduation, at the end of this year, from the United Nations list of least developed countries. This will have enormous implications for Maldives' economy and for our continued socio-economic development. Despite this, we welcome graduation as a reflection of our progress over many years and as the start of a new phase in our national development.

That said, it would be not only wrong but also dangerous to assume that Maldives' well-documented vulnerabilities as a small island developing nation will disappear the moment we are recognized as a middle-income country. Indeed, no one would question the fact that Maldives remains acutely vulnerable at the economic, commercial, social and environmental levels. Thus, the question is how we might square the circle and agree that graduation is a positive development to be welcomed while, at the same time, conceding that key vulnerabilities remain and that small island States like Maldives will continue to need support if we are to meet the MDGs.

To us, the answer is clear. There is a need for a far better, more efficient, more targeted and more measurable system of United Nations support for small island developing nations. This reform system must include a formal transparent category for small island developing States.

Before concluding, I want to briefly touch on two MDGs on which Maldives, relatively speaking, has made less progress. These are MDG 3, on achieving

gender equality and women's empowerment, and MDG 7, on ensuring environmental sustainability.

Overall, the gender gap in Maldives is closing, albeit perhaps more slowly than is necessary to meet MDG 3 by 2015. In certain circumstances, the cultural and social norms of the country create obstacles to women's equal participation in society, while isolation and a lack of access to resources and educational and employment opportunities likewise pose major challenges, especially for girls and women. The creation of space and opportunities for women to contribute to development is a policy priority for the Government. Gender mainstreaming is now obligatory across all Government policy areas, while new laws are being prepared to combat discrimination and violence against women.

Environmental sustainability is one of the most fundamental problems in Maldives, challenging our basic right to life. The country has considerable ground to cover to achieve MDG 7. Maldives is determined to play its part. Protecting the environment is a priority for the Government, and last year we announced plans to become the world's first carbon-neutral country. However, the transnational nature of environmental harm means that we cannot win this battle alone. We need the commitment and support of the international community, especially in the context of climate change.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia.

Mr. Hor (Cambodia): I am very pleased to participate in this very important and timely Meeting for the mid-term review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and for common reflection on the next step to take to relieve the world from poverty.

With less than five years to the target date of 2015, the achievement of the MDGs has so far been a mixed picture of shortfalls and successes. The apprehension that most of the least developed countries (LDCs) will have difficulties in achieving the MDGs by 2015 is accentuated by unfolding multiple crises relating to the global economic meltdown, food insecurity, climate change and debt relief.

Meeting the MDG target of halving poverty by 2015 will require steady economic growth and a more pro-poor policy. A number of governance reforms to create an enabling environment for poverty reduction are also needed. It is important to expand growth in sectors that can generate greater employment and to invest more intensively in sectors, such as health and education, that build human capacity to engage more productively in economic activities.

Another important concern for developing countries is how to get more commercially meaningful access to international markets. Therefore, concerted efforts should be made to get the Doha Round negotiations back on track towards a successful conclusion in order to break down trade barriers, particularly for agricultural products, and to reduce agricultural subsidies in developed countries. In this respect, the granting of quota-free and duty-free schemes for products from developing countries would contribute to raising export earnings and make trade exchange work for development.

In addition, the developed countries should fulfil their commitment to meeting the internationally agreed target of allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance to all developing countries, as well as to meeting the internationally agreed target of allocating 0.15-0.20 per cent of their gross national income to LDCs. More serious consideration should also be given to relieving poor countries of their debt burden, thus increasing their financial resources to fund essential development projects and meet the MDGs. All these measures are not only a question of generosity, but also an obligation in creating a safe world for all.

In 2003, the Royal Government of Cambodia adopted its own development targets, called Cambodia MDGs, which are incorporated comprehensively into phase II of our Rectangular Strategy and our National Strategic Development Plan 2009-2013. Cambodia is therefore on track to achieve the MDG targets for reducing child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and forging a global partnership for development. In recognizing the outstanding success of these efforts, last Sunday the MDG Award Committee in New York presented to Cambodia the MDG Award 2010 for MDG 6.

According to a recent study by the Overseas Development Institute and the United Nations

Millennium Campaign, Cambodia is listed among 20 countries making the most absolute progress on the MDGs and on track to meet the target of halving poverty by 2015. Indeed, we are pleased to see that the improvement in poverty reduction is visible throughout the country. There has also been substantial improvement in education. We are now implementing phase II of the Rectangular Strategy, in which our national strategy for poverty reduction is a priority. Nonetheless, we are fully aware that, despite this significant progress towards sustainable development, Cambodia still faces many of the challenges faced by most developing countries.

Among these tremendous challenges, poverty reduction remains the highest and foremost priority of the developing countries. From Cambodia's perspective, we have learned that peace and political and macroeconomic stability, supported by a vibrant development partnership, are keys to sustainable development, which would provide us with a better opportunity to address the challenges we face in meeting the MDGs by 2015.

We now have less than five years to achieve the MDGs. Taking into account the challenges facing developing countries, we need more than ever the participation of all developed countries and financial Institutions; otherwise, our efforts to achieve the MDGs will be in vain.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Gunilla Carlsson, Minister of International Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Ms. Carlsson (Sweden): The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent a common agenda to enhance and coordinate our efforts for poverty eradication and sustainable global development. The MDGs are about improving the lives of the world's poorest people: everyone's right to take an active part in shaping their own future and that of their families, communities and countries. They are about enabling people to move out of poverty and into lives of freedom and opportunity.

Governments that pursue democratic development hand in hand with human rights stand a better chance of achieving the MDGs. The overall trend is positive. Infant and child mortality have dropped, and more girls attend school. Evidence shows that the MDGs can be met if there is sufficient political will.

However, despite the progress, we still face challenges. Millions of people suffer from hunger and lack access to safe drinking water. Climate change affects our living conditions. The poorest suffer the most, and Africa is particularly hard-hit.

Sweden is deeply concerned that some MDGs are lagging behind. That is especially true of MDG 5, on maternal health. It is unacceptable that hundreds of thousands of women, most of them very young, die every year from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. The causes of maternal mortality are well known and, in most cases, preventable.

We cannot ignore the right of women, men and young people to sexual education and access to reproductive health services. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that 13 per cent of maternal deaths are caused by unsafe abortions. Maternal health must be addressed within a comprehensive approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights. There is a strong link with gender equality, which is the best way to ensure a woman's right to her own body. Sweden will continue to defend, protect and promote those rights.

Investment in national health systems is critical. It leads to healthier mothers, children and families. Healthy mothers contribute to higher levels of education, economic growth and productivity, as healthy women can participate fully in social and economic life.

Sweden welcomes the Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health. We congratulate him on making MDG 4 and MDG 5 a priority for the whole United Nations system. The Strategy provides a vision and emphasizes the need for reporting, oversight and transparency, but it needs more concrete targets to ensure compliance and accountability. What is measured gets done, and what is done must be measured. This is closely linked to my Government's commitment to working for a more transparent and efficient aid system.

International resources are, and will continue to be, important to meet the MDGs. Even more important are domestic resources, such as taxes in developing countries themselves. National systems should generate resources so that teachers and midwives, for example, can be paid decent salaries. We also need a joint commitment to work against corruption. Fraud is unacceptable, and people should not have to bribe their way to access to basic services.

We have a shared responsibility to fulfil our commitments to achieving all the MDGs by 2015. We need to deliver on our promises. This is true of developed and developing countries alike. The Swedish Government intends to do its part and will continue to engage with civil society and others. I call upon colleagues in the developed world to honour their official development assistance commitments now, just as I call upon colleagues in the developing countries to reinforce their ownership and leadership. There are five years to go. Let's do it.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Senator Maxine McClean, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Ms. McClean (Barbados): I join with fellow delegates in congratulating Ambassador Deiss on his efficient leadership of the General Assembly. The Barbados delegation also commends him and his Co-Chair for the hosting of this high-level summit. It serves as motivation to complete the journey started in 2000. We all committed to a set of time-bound and targeted goals aimed at eradicating poverty in all its forms, namely, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The summit is very timely. It has been convened during the most severe economic crisis faced by the international community since the 1930s. Simultaneously, the world has been experiencing the ravages of the worst natural disasters in recent memory, which, we believe, are linked to climate change. These phenomena have either slowed the progress of some Member States in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015 or, in other cases, undermined their capacity and capability to continue making the effort.

I must make a case for Barbados and other countries classified as either high- or middle-income countries. Through struggle and hard work, we have endeavoured over the years to place our countries on a path to sustainable development. By adopting strategies such as universal primary health care and compulsory education, we have made significant strides that have allowed us to pursue an MDG-plus strategy in some areas. Much remains to be done, and we cannot do it alone.

Extreme poverty and hunger are barriers to global development. In Barbados, while poverty is relative, there are the peculiarities and vulnerabilities that come with being a small island developing State. We are exposed to natural disasters and the ravages of climate change. As open economies, we are susceptible to external shocks. Given these vulnerabilities, the question of the graduation of middle-income developing countries like Barbados must be revisited.

The eradication of poverty is a priority on the development agenda, and, in the present economic environment, Barbados has worked with determination to maintain its national safety net. We recognize that the effective and efficient delivery of social services will have a positive impact on the maintenance of our national safety net. We also appreciate the need for this as we seek to ensure that the quality of life and standard of living to which we have become accustomed continue.

Moreover, Barbados firmly believes that the empowerment of the population is one way to enhance good governance as we strive to achieve the MDGs. Institutional frameworks have thus been strengthened, with the goal of reducing the current fragmentation among our social services agencies. Our goal is to ensure the seamless and timely delivery of those services. Evidence-based policymaking is being pursued and monitoring systems are being enhanced.

The following initiatives have been launched: a country assessment of living conditions, a national database for client tracking and a universal intake form that permits client assessment by a single agency for all types of assistance sought.

While we are proud of these initiatives, we are painfully aware that all these gains can be derailed by a hurricane or an earthquake or, as is the present case, by the collapse of financial markets. That is why the eradication of extreme poverty and extreme hunger cannot be seen in isolation from the other Goals.

The Caribbean ranks second only to sub-Saharan Africa in terms of the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. High political commitment and our expanded multisectoral response strategy, with the assistance of the World Bank, have allowed persons living with HIV and AIDS universal access to treatment. Consequently, deaths due to HIV and AIDS have been significantly reduced and mother-to-child transmission is almost a thing of the past. There has been an increase in knowledge but no corresponding behavioural change. Infection rates remain unacceptable, raising questions

concerning the sustainability of our treatment programmes.

Ironically, our successes in these areas have brought with them other difficulties. Our expenditures continue to rise, even though we are unable to readily access grant funding, given our categorization as a high/middle-income country. We have redoubled our efforts at prevention, recognizing that those affected fall within the age cohort of 15 to 49, the bedrock of the labour force. In addition, women are being infected at a faster rate than men.

As stated by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, there is need for a prevention revolution, since prolonging life is not the only goal in combating the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Targeted attention is being paid to several population segments, including persons with disabilities, particularly those who are mentally challenged. The Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, Urban and Rural Development and the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development are collaborating to prepare manuals in language easily understood by this target group. Connect Barbados, a public sector-private sector partnership, is converting current literature on HIV and AIDS into Braille, thus making it accessible to those who are blind or visually impaired. However, high-risk groups are yet to be targeted with the same intensity.

There is also the increasing incidence of lifestyle diseases: diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, for example. Education, promotion of physical activity and good nutrition are being pursued. Government is challenged however, to deliver the necessary therapies and medical procedures. It also has to address the high morbidity costs associated with these non-communicable diseases. Together, these challenge Government's development programme. We therefore still have a long way to go, if we are to achieve MDG 6, which relates to combating HIV and AIDS and other diseases.

We need also to address environmental sustainability. In 2002, Barbados finalized a sustainable development policy. We have embarked on greening the economy and are exploring the use of alternative energy, utilizing, for example, wind farms and solar energy. Incentives are in place to encourage the use of these alternatives. However, these initiatives call for significant capital investment, which will impede implementation.

Closely linked to this is the need to address climate change. The Barbados Programme of Action, crafted at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held at Bridgetown, Barbados, in 1994, identified this as one of the critical areas to be addressed in ensuring sustainable economic development in the Caribbean region. It was reiterated then, and the point continues to be made, that the impact of climate change can have a devastating effect on all economic sectors and, by extension, on human development. In light of this, Barbados has continued to shore up its capacity for natural disaster management.

Barbados is the fifteenth most densely populated country in the world. This places tremendous pressure on land and other resources as well as on the demand for housing. The Government of Barbados has thus prioritized housing and is currently addressing this need, especially for citizens in the lower economic strata.

In my presentation, I have highlighted some efforts being undertaken by Barbados to mitigate the variables which threaten to derail the attainment of the MDGs. We recognize that if the MDGs are to be fully achieved, Goal 8 must be operationalized. The global partnership of which it speaks must be effective.

Barbados therefore calls for a review of the criteria used to classify countries and their implications for extending support to countries like ours. Barbados also calls for a forging of partnerships between South and South and South and North, as these are the only avenues available to achieve the MDGs and to lay the foundation for comprehensive global development.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Osman Mohammed Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea.

Mr. Saleh (Eritrea): Five years before the target date of 2015, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are begging to be achieved, and I stand here today to challenge the Assembly to achieve these Goals that should and can be achieved with renewed commitment and by refocusing our action over the next five years. That makes this High-level Plenary Meeting so important. I wish to also congratulate the Co-Chairs, on behalf of the Eritrean delegation, on presiding over

this historic gathering to address the challenges and to get back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

At this juncture, I wish to thank Ambassador Paul Badji of Senegal and Ambassador Carsten Staur of Denmark who, in their capacities as co-facilitators, worked tirelessly to give us the draft outcome document before us today in document A/65/L.1. They did an excellent job indeed and deserve our deep appreciation.

The MDGs are the most unifying goals in the United Nations system. Therefore, the achievement of the MDGs should continue to remain the top priority of the development agenda. We should stay the course and press on with what we started at the beginning of the millennium. Let us keep the promises we made at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. If we do not deliver on those promises come 2015, we will be terribly failing the people, who are looking to us, and the credibility of our multilateralism will be adversely affected. That is why my delegation considers that we must challenge ourselves at this juncture.

I wish to draw the attention of the Assembly to The Millennium Development Goals Report 2007, published by the United Nations, which stated

> "that the MDGs will be attained only if concerted additional action is taken immediately and sustained until 2015. All stakeholders need to fulfil, in their entirety, the commitments they made in the Millennium Declaration and subsequent pronouncements".

Therefore, we should remain committed.

My own country, Eritrea, is committed, and it is doing its best to achieve the MDGs by 2015. It has invested hundreds of millions of dollars, especially in infrastructure for food security to make hunger history. In its first national millennium development report of November 2006, Eritrea asserted that it was on track to achieve the goals relating to gender equality in primary education, child health, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases and access to safe water. The second national report, which will be published in the coming weeks, updates the progress Eritrea has made towards the achievement of the MDGs since 1995. In my brief statement, I will focus on four areas: health, education, gender equality and the environment.

In the sphere of health, as we all know, three out of the eight MDGs and six out of the 17 targets directly relate to health. My statement discusses where Eritrea is at this juncture with respect to the MDGs and their targets and indicators. Nine indicators have been used to monitor progress made in the health sector between 1993-1995 and 2010. I am pleased to report that remarkable progress has been made in most areas of health during the last 15 years in Eritrea. The under-five mortality, infant mortality and maternal mortality rates have declined between 1993-1995 and 2010 by 53.7 per cent, 41.7 per cent and 51.3 per cent, respectively.

This progress in the health sector has come about as a result of the Government's heavy investment, in cooperation with some partners, in the construction of new health facilities, the upgrading and rehabilitating of existing facilities and the provision of equipment, drugs and other supplies. Perhaps the most important investment the Government has made in order to achieve these results is in the area of human resources development. At present, 75 per cent of the population has access to health care within a 10 kilometre radius as opposed to 40 per cent at the time of liberation in 1991. Immunization coverage for the third dose of combined diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and hepatitis B vaccine for children between 12 and 23 months is at over 90 per cent. Eritrea is certified for eliminating tetanus and being a polio-free country. HIV/AIDS prevalence was estimated to be 2.4 per cent in 2002. At the present time it is down to 0.7 per cent, which is a 71 per cent decrease in this killer disease.

As concerns education, upon Eritrea's liberation in May 1991, my Government placed education among the top priorities for the country. Eritrea strongly believes that education is essential for the overall sustainable development of the nation. On this premise, my Government made education free to all from primary to tertiary levels. Our education sector development programme outlined in 2005 represented a significant step forward for the education sector since it advanced a comprehensive approach to improve access to basic, adult, general and technical and vocational education. In this connection, Eritrea has made significant progress in rehabilitating and expanding the education sector in the past 20 years.

Two indicators, net primary school enrolment and literacy rate of ages 15 to 24, have been used to monitor progress in education. The indicators show

that huge advances have been achieved in enrolment in elementary school education. It rose from 30 per cent in 1993-1995 to 56.2 per cent in 2010, an increase of 87.3 per cent. In the same period, it is also heartening to see the literacy rate of 15- to 24-year-olds reaching 85.2 per cent. Despite this gain, however, the area of education still remains a challenge to the Government and certainly more resources will be needed to enhance access to education.

Participation in education is, nevertheless, not determined solely by expanding access to education. Whether or not communities take advantage of the increased opportunities is also influenced by a number of other determinants, including economic, cultural and religious factors. For example, the cultural prejudice against women's education is a well-established phenomenon in many societies in the world, especially in the developing ones.

In the matter of gender equality, significant progress has been made at all three levels of the educational ladder — elementary, middle and secondary education — and in literacy. The ratio of girls to boys declines as we move up the three levels of education. The ratio for primary education has gone up from 80 per cent in 1993-1995 to 96.4 per cent in 2010, an increase of 16.4 per cent.

As to the environment, the number of people with sustainable access to improved sources of water has increased from 21.7 per cent in 1993-1995 to 57.9 per cent at the present time. This is an increase of 167 per cent. Eritrea being a non-oil producing country, more than three quarters of its population uses solid forms of energy. This presents not only a major threat to the environment but also a serious constraint to the country's development efforts. Modest gains have been made in sanitation. A lot more needs to be done in this vital area.

In conclusion, it is this delegation's fervent hope that the Member States, the United Nations agencies and the international community gathered here work together, in true partnership, to make the MDGs a success. Then and only then will we be able to see the accomplishment of a purpose we all can be proud of. Let us go to work and make it happen.

The Acting Chair: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Win (Myanmar): Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000, we have spent almost one decade working for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Yet, progress towards reaching them remains uneven and varies from region to region. With only five years to go, we need to step up our efforts to achieve the goals set for 2015.

While national governments have the primary responsibility to ensure progress, the international community must help by creating an environment that will enable developing countries to make firmer strides in their road to development. In this regard, we share the view of the Group of 77 that, without substantial international support, many of the MDGs will likely remain unfulfilled in many developing countries by 2015.

I am pleased to note that our own region, the Asia Pacific, has been able to make significant progress towards achieving the MDGs. However, not all the developing countries in the region are making strong progress towards all the targets. Some are facing challenges in attaining these goals. On the other hand, despite the economic slowdown and challenges, we are encouraged to see the developing world being on the right track to meet the poverty reduction target by 2015.

In Myanmar, the Government is striving to promote better living standards for its people through the implementation of its national development plan, which is inextricably linked to the MDGs. The MDG targets have been accorded priority in the context of national development and poverty alleviation. The national plan focuses on the promotion of the equitable and balanced socio-economic development of both rural and urban areas. The three ongoing development programmes — the border areas development programme, the 24 special development zones and the integrated rural development plan — have been incorporated into the national plan of action for the MDGs. The results from those programmes encompass a wide range of MDG targets.

In ensuring environmental sustainability, my country has been formulating Myanmar Agenda 21, with the aim of facilitating the integration of environmental sustainability. Reserved forest areas in Myanmar increased from 38,876 square miles in 1998 to 62,002 square miles in 2009. Moreover, recently, on 3 August, the Myanmar Government designated the

Hukaung valley as an inviolable wildlife sanctuary. The valley is now the world's largest tiger reserve, stretching 6,748 square miles inhabited by a number of endangered mammal, bird and plant species.

Despite the challenges, Myanmar has made progress in achieving most of the eight MDGs to varying degrees, especially in such areas as poverty alleviation, food security and the promotion of education and health. Myanmar's food security programme, which is focused on expanding agricultural, livestock and fisheries production, has enabled us not only to achieve not only food self-sufficiency but also to contribute to fulfilling the needs of others in the region and beyond.

Education occupies a place of high priority in Myanmar in our drive for human resources development. A large number of school, colleges and universities have been expanded to various regions to provide better access to education. The school enrolment rate has been dramatically increased, to 98.13 per cent in 2009, thanks to nationwide activities, such as the All School-age Children in School Project. The Literacy rate has also grown, to 94.83 per cent in 2009. In term of gender equality, the ratio of girls to boys in primary education increased to 97.43 per cent in 2009.

Similar progress has also been recorded on maternal health and mortality, which may be attributed to our 30-year national health plan, which accords priority to the eradication of major diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

The under-five mortality rate has also been reduced by half, from 130 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 66.1 per 1,000 live births in 2003. It is still declining. We are also on course to achieving the MDG target of a reduction of maternal mortality by three quarters.

International assistance can serve as an important catalyst for developing countries' efforts to achieve their development goals. Therefore, comprehensive fulfilment of official development assistance commitments, increased investment flows, market access and resolution of debt problems are essential to enable the developing countries to realize the MDGs targets.

In conclusion, I wish to assure members that Myanmar will continue to strive to achieve the MDGs through our national plan and strategy. At the same time, Myanmar stands ready to work more closely with the United Nations and international development partners to fully attain the MDG targets. We sincerely hope that this High-level Meeting will come up with new approaches and concrete steps to accelerate progress on achieving the MDGs in the next five years.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Paul Oquist Kelley, Minister of National Policies of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Kelley (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) means solving technical, administrative and financial problems and problems related to political will. It also means facing up to structural challenges such the tendency of income and wealth to be concentrated in a few hands under the current economic and social model. This has grown worse since 1980, when neo-liberalism arrived and the Washington Consensus pushed for deregulation, privatization and minimizing the role for the State, including its role in distribution. The result has been greater inequality between and within countries. This is particularly notable in Latin American and the Caribbean, which is the region with the world's highest level of inequality. But it has also affected developed countries: in fact, in real terms, an average working family in the United States had a larger income in 1980 than it does today, leading to imbalances that contributed to the financial and economic crisis.

In Nicaragua, extreme poverty rose between 2001 and 2005, but since 2007 the Government of President Daniel Ortega Saavedra has succeeded in reducing extreme poverty despite the worst financial and economic crisis of world capitalism since the Great Depression. Today's official figure for extreme poverty is now 14.6 per cent, halfway to the Goal. But an independent study, financed by the Netherlands and Switzerland with technical assistance from the World Bank, found that in 2009 Nicaragua had already attained the Goal 1 target, with extreme poverty at a figure of 9.7 per cent. And in a 2010 report, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme found that Nicaragua had met Goal 1 in terms of reducing malnutrition.

We have also made progress on all other indicators apart from that relating to HIV/AIDS, which has increased. But Nicaragua continues to have the

lowest HIV/AIDS rate in Central America. This is an international problem and requires greater worldwide efforts if nations are to reach the Goal.

Let me give a few examples of how our indicators have improved. Illiteracy fell from 22 per cent in 2006 to 3.3 per cent in 2009, thanks to a campaign using the successful Cuban model, "Yo sí puedo" — "Yes I Can". Maternal and infant mortality rates have fallen and the malaria rate fell from 4.4 per 100,000 inhabitants in the baseline year to 1.1 today. Indeed, there have been no deaths from malaria whatsoever in the past three years.

Nicaragua has benefited from the most wonderful innovation in financing of the century. I speak of Venezuelan solidarity through the Petrocaribe agreements, which convert half of the hydrocarbon bills of poor countries into long-term soft credit for poverty reduction. Support from the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) process, the Bank of ALBA and the new regional currency, the sucre, are additional innovative dimensions of this new alternative model of solidarity.

These are examples of the innovative financing that is needed if we are to meet the challenges of reducing poverty and inequality as well as the consequences of climate change — and to meet them simultaneously. It has been estimated that an additional $50 billion in official development assistance would be needed every year to attain the MDGs by 2015. However, under the present conditions that seems very unlikely. Only five countries provide 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product as official development assistance today.

At the beginning of this conference we heard Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon appeal to donor countries not to reduce their external assistance because of the crisis. It could be more effective to issue $250 billion in Special Drawing Rights, like those funds that were so quickly approved and distributed to the central banks of the world in 2008 and 2009 in order to maintain global financial liquidity. Issuing such funds for the MDGs would show that reducing by half extreme poverty worldwide has at least the same priority as rescuing banks.

We also need an inclusive struggle for the MDGs. In this connection, we welcome progress in the last two years in efforts to support of peace and prosperity on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and we hope that the United Nations will be able to find appropriate ways of enabling Taiwan to participate in this struggle in which we are all involved.

The Government of President Comandante Daniel Ortega managed to reduce poverty by giving priority to the production of micro-, small and middle-sized businesses, including access to fair credit, seeds and fertilizers. Capital was provided directly to women in the informal sector in cities and to women in rural areas. The Government also restored the human and constitutional right to free education and public health, which had been denied because of cost-recovery policies of the neo-liberal Governments. Similarly, public transport, water and electricity were subsidized for the urban poor, and low-income State workers were given vouchers from Christian, socialist and solidarity sources.

To sum up, deregulation, privatization, liberalization and minimization of the role of the State were replaced with policies that facilitate the State's role in promoting development and redistributing income and consumption in direct support for the poor. The result has been a drop in the Gini coefficient from 0.41 to 0.36 during the period of 2005 to 2009, giving Nicaragua the lowest level of inequality in Central America.

To maintain those achievements, we need economic growth. The good news is that Nicaraguan exports to date are 30 per cent higher than they were at this time last year. However, there are serious threats for us and for everybody, such as a double-dip recession or a lost decade for many countries in terms of repaying their debts — such as what happened to Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1980s, when the regional economy shrank 1.9 per cent throughout the entire decade.

We all need global economic recovery to achieve the MDGs. It should be clear already that that is not possible only through public expenditure, and soon it will be clear that this also applies to savings. Instead, we face various massive imbalances that show there is a need to change the current financial and economic structure. That is because globalization happened so quickly, the market was so dominant, the State so weak, regulation so impotent, speculation so profitable, the virtual economy so much more diverse than the real economy, financial capital so hegemonic, credit so limited, investment so short-term, high unemployment

so persistent, trade imbalances so chronic, debt so huge, the issuing of money so astronomical, the principal reserve currency so undisciplined and international political power so concentrated. Those factors are interrelated and form vicious circles that impede the transition to the new model that is so urgently needed if we are to achieve economic recovery and reduce the structural inequality that has contributed to the crisis.

In conclusion, I would like to state that if these issues are not addressed, achieving the MDGs by 2015, or any other date, will be in jeopardy. The same can be said of the chances of reaching an inclusive and binding global agreement on climate change within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

The solution lies in inclusiveness and the democratization of international political and economic relations in order to achieve global peace and stability with human rights and social justice and without poverty — in other words, the very purposes for which the United Nations was established.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Edward Nalbandyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Nalbandyan (Armenia): I would like to warmly congratulate Mr. Deiss on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session and assure him that Armenia will continue to bring its constructive contribution to the Assembly's work. I would also like to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Treki, for his work during the previous session.

Ten years ago, at the dawn of the new millennium, we affirmed our collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level, and we identified those goals that should be achieved by each and every country by 2015 in order to have a more peaceful, prosperous and just world for the coming generations. It was the uneven economic and social development that was considered to be our biggest challenge, with its dire implications for the overall security of human beings and society as a whole. Subsequent developments, when unprecedented security challenges overtook our agenda, once again exposed the truth of the postulation that development is freedom.

Today, we are discussing how successful we have been in bridging the gaps and building on the progress made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. As noble and far-reaching as those Goals are, certain geopolitical realities create impediments on the way to completing the realization of those aims.

When we embark on the last five-year leg of our development commitments, we have to understand clearly all the security implications of our actions, both nationally and internationally. The food and financial crises of recent years made the increased interconnectedness and interdependence in today's globalized world more obvious. All countries were hit by their impact, and Armenia was no exception. Yet despite all these difficulties, we continue to proceed steadily towards the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

Armenia embarked on implementation of the Goals by launching sound economic reforms and nationalizing the Goals by identifying 16 targets that corresponded to country-specific priorities, which emphasized the need for ensuring sustainable economic growth through reliance on competition, innovation and equal opportunity for all. We have also promoted reduction in income differentials and equality in regional development through an in-depth reform of territorial administration, developing effective public governance and continuing the fight against corruption. Furthermore, Armenia has exerted additional efforts on relevant programmes by promoting education and science, strengthening the social security system and expanding targeted programmes, with a focus on health care, pensions and gender equality.

The international community will be able to achieve its goals set for 2015 only through concerted and coordinated efforts. This is the path to follow in all parts of the world, including our region. However, the overall regional situation does not allow for the full utilization of all of the economic advantages of the South Caucasus. Existing resources are being diverted from the development goals. Closed borders and the continuing blockade of Armenia by two of its neighbours curtail opportunities to accelerate development both nationally and regionally.

The record of the past 20 years clearly demonstrates what Armenia has stated all along. There will be no possibility of comprehensive development

for any of the countries in the South Caucasus if it comes at the expense of the others, and the creation of dividing lines would be devastating for the region and increase the risk of instability.

Regional cooperation is the only viable path to pursue, and we have advocated for strong regional cooperation schemes. In this regard, open borders, linked lines of communication and interrelated economic systems will be crucial. Yet, this concept has yet to gain ground and understanding in some of our neighbours' policies and approaches.

Recognizing that security and development are closely intertwined, in the Millennium Declaration Governments pledged to "spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war, whether within or between States" (*resolution 55/2, para. 8*). In that context, the proliferation of arms and weapons continues to pose a threat not only to peace and security, but also and increasingly to economic and social development. It is unfortunate that our region faces that danger.

Azerbaijan continues to reject the proposal to come to an agreement on the non-use or threat of force. This goes against the underlying principles of the United Nations, an Organization whose founders came together to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Today, we witness militaristic stances, multifold increases in military budgets, warlike rhetoric and provocations masterminded by that country, which has created obstacles to the establishment of lasting peace and stability in the region, which is a precondition for prospective development.

While we register our accomplishments and share our concerns, there remain people that fall through the cracks of the international community's attention. The people of Nagorno-Karabakh are doing their best to provide for better living conditions and the protection of all human rights in their territory, yet they do so without the support of the international community. Nagorno-Karabakh continues to await relevant assistance programmes. Unless we learn to undo the harm caused to innocent people here and there by our inaction, we will not be in a position to report that all of the Millennium Development Goals have been achieved and that equality and equity have been attained at the global level.

With the adoption of the draft outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (A/65/L.1), we hope to bridge the gaps in our development agendas, boost our efforts to overcome the challenges on the path to the full realization of the Millennium Goals, and steadily chart our way to a better, secure and prosperous future.

Pursuant to resolutions 36/67 and 55/282, today we mark the International Day of Peace, which is devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples and is observed as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence. On this special day, the Republic of Armenia also celebrates its independence. In light of today's importance and the sense of added duty that it places upon us, I would like to state that Armenia is determined to contribute positively towards the achievement of our common noble goals of peace, justice, liberty and equitable prosperity.

The Acting Chair: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Franco Frattini, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Frattini (Italy): The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide us with a road map we must follow to assure a better future in 2015 and beyond — a world that is less unjust, less divided and less unstable. The MDGs have provided a framework for the efforts of all international stakeholders in development and helped to improve living conditions in the poorest countries. At the same time, not all of the MDG promises have been kept and major international challenges have emerged in the past 10 years.

From now on, we need to multiply our efforts to meet the MDGs and to focus on achieving concrete results. With the emergence of new stakeholders and global challenges, development can come about only through shared responsibility and a broader array of initiatives. Global challenges require ambition and a global vision.

Reports of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Development Programme confirm that progress has been made and that the MDGs are within reach, although much remains to be done, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the least developed countries and fragile States. The donor community will have to accelerate the MDG process by forging a broader partnership with non-governmental actors and

developing countries, which hold the primary responsibility for their own development. Harmonization, coordination and aid effectiveness comprise the ruling principles of our action.

Ten years after their adoption, it is clear that the MDGs were never meant to be exclusive strategies. The MDGs are a formula to shape a partnership for development beyond the traditional pattern of donor-receiver relations. Far too often, we have found ourselves trapped in a statistical logic consisting of percentages and figures rather than policies and concrete results.

The Millennium Development Goals philosophy entails a major reconsideration of the entire international agenda, including development, good governance and taxation, better economic and financial regulation, a more equitable distribution of wealth and tackling climate change and market access. Providing these and other global public goods is closely interlinked with development goals. Unless these policies are given high priority, development will not be sustainable enough to resist possible future turbulence in world politics and the international economy.

This is all the more true in the light of the recent financial crisis. European financial security has teetered on the edge. Our Governments have had to fall short of their commitments to development because of financial constraints and, in Europe, budget requirements. In these circumstances, the single most useful thing Europe can do for developing countries is to put its own economy back on the path of sustainable growth so that the South can fully benefit from expanding demand in the North. One-third of people living below the threshold of extreme poverty reside in fragile and post-conflict States. Hence, the role of peace and stability in fighting poverty cannot be denied.

Italy is the sixth largest contributor to the United Nations regular and peacekeeping budgets, and in light of the priority we give to institution-building and to increasing peace and stability as the basis for sustainable development, we are one of the largest contributors of peacekeeping troops. But we are also convinced that development is still the result of deep transformation in society and of full respect for human rights.

With this in mind, Italy has been engaged, together with a group of like-minded countries, in the campaign for the elimination of female genital mutilation. Female genital mutilation has a negative impact on the achievement of the MDGs, and specifically Goals 3 and 5. We are fully committed to enhancing the campaign against female genital mutilation through a resolution of the General Assembly. While speaking about gender issues, let me salute with satisfaction the appointment of Michelle Bachelet as the head of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Mr. Ould Hadram (Mauritania), Vice-President of the General Assembly, took the Chair.

Concluding my remarks, Italy's entire foreign policy is grounded in our constitutional values of peace and justice among nations. The Italian people have always been and still are on the side of development and solidarity. Our strategy is inspired by the principle of aid effectiveness — a holistic vision of development. I would like to point out that food security continues to be a high political priority for my country. We remain strongly committed to the process that was initiated during the Italian presidency of the Group of Eight (G8) with the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, later endorsed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in November 2009. It is those same principles that are now at the heart of the much needed Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, to which we are firmly committed in order to achieve a new, more effective governance structure in global food security.

We have been active in the field of innovative financial resources, encouraging the work of the Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development and supporting advanced market commitments, the International Finance Facility for Immunization and the migrant remittances initiatives, all discussed in 2009 at the G8 summit with many African countries.

Finally, the European Union positions at this High-Level Meeting, to which we have contributed, are a call for more action-oriented solidarity with all our partners and stakeholders in development. Let us join efforts to ensure that the MDGs become a reality.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. Radosław Sikorski, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Sikorski (Poland): Time is ticking away for the opportunity to honour the pledge that we have made to reduce poverty in the world. With five years to go, are we on track to reach the Millennium Development Goals? Well, there has been some progress. The latest report of the Secretary-General on this subject (A/64/665) gives cause for optimism. The child mortality rate has fallen by 28 per cent. The number of slum dwellers has declined by 6 per cent. Nine in 10 children in the developing countries are now enrolled in primary education. These success stories should not, however, mask the reality that unless we strengthen our political will and take innovative policy steps, attaining the Millennium Goals will prove elusive.

I would like to address three issues that I think should inform our efforts in the future. First, we need to raise aid effectiveness and strengthen partnerships with the corporate and philanthropic sectors. Secondly, we must devote more attention to countries of conflict and fragility. And thirdly, we must acknowledge the imperative of collectively living up to the norms underlying the Millennium Development Goals.

Thinking how we could improve the delivery of assistance and strike up successful partnerships, the world's Governments should heed the example of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for instance. It proves that an institution that is light on bureaucracy, accountable and willing to take risks for the sake of trying out new approaches is able to do wonders. Projects like that, or the revolutionary concept of microcredit financing pioneered by the banker of the poor, Nobel Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, also show a promising face of corporate social responsibility. Microcredit works because often the only handicap a budding entrepreneur in the developing world faces is access to a small amount of money for start-up business costs. By teaming up with the private sector, Governments may help to empower people who desperately desire to lift themselves out of poverty.

We also need to pay more attention to countries of conflict and fragility, as they are the most off-track from the Millennium Development Goals. Afghanistan exemplifies best the interconnection between security and development in a conflict-torn country. Without either, stabilization fails. Two months ago, when I visited Polish troops and aid workers in Afghanistan, I had the opportunity to tour the province of Bamyan. I was impressed when I had the opportunity to speak with a female governor. I saw girls going to school and plenty of indicators of economic growth. The overall record in that country is admittedly patchy, which is all the more reason to link better fulfilment of Millennium Development Goals with post-conflict rehabilitation efforts.

Thirty years ago, the birth of the 10 million-strong Solidarity movement showed that Poles can take matters into their own hands. In like manner, each State has to play the primary role in stimulating its own development. The Polish people were helped by others, so today we feel obligated to extend our assistance to those less fortunate. The greatest Pole, the late Pope John Paul II, exhorted us to assume the duty of solidarity for the benefit of peoples that aspire to full development. Through our renewed commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, we can heed his call.

Indeed, Poland is trying to do its share. We have been increasing the level of our official development assistance. In an example of thinking globally and acting regionally, through the European Union's Eastern Partnership initiative we are helping foster growth in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Although Poland is a relative newcomer to development assistance, our ambition is to live up to the solidarity for development ideal. Let us all turn this ideal into a reality.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Marie-Josée Jacobs, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian .Action of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Ms. Jacobs (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Luxembourg fully associates itself with the statement made yesterday by the President of the European Commission, Mr. José Manuel Barroso, on behalf of the European Union.

The fight against poverty is a long-term effort, and the road to sustainable development is tortuous and paved with obstacles. This week, we have returned to New York to affirm that the path we set out on 10 years ago was the right one, to conduct an honest mid-term review of this path, and to reaffirm our political will and commitment to our mission while recognizing the new global challenges before us.

We do this on the basis of the important reports and analyses of the Secretary-General and United Nations agencies on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). I take this opportunity to thank them warmly for these efforts.

We live in an era in which life is accelerating at an unprecedented rate throughout the world. The impatience and doubt shown by some due to the lack of immediate achievement of the MDGs are ill-advised. Let us not be impatient, but persevere in our follow-up of ideas.

That being said, I am the last to seek to hide the truth. The results of our collective action to implement the MDGs since 2000 are mixed. The progress made and the results obtained vary greatly depending on the sector, continent, region and even within countries themselves. That is why Luxembourg joins the ranks of those calling for greater efforts in the sectors and regions that are furthest behind.

One conclusion is clear. We, the international community — industrialized, emerging and developing countries alike — have not done nearly as much to effectively fight maternal and infant mortality as we have to raise primary school enrolment figures. Is this by choice, out of incompetence or for lack of means? We will not answer that question today, although it deserves serious consideration. It is all the same a bitter and blunt conclusion that compels us to step up our efforts, especially since we know perfectly well that gender equality and women's and children's health are objectives that have an unrivalled potential to trigger further progress in the implementation of the other goals to which we are attached.

This is why I salute the Secretary-General's initiative to launch the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health. It is also why I welcome the creation of UN Women, which promises more structured, more coordinated and thus more effective global action in this important field. In that connection, I congratulate Mrs. Bachelet on her nomination to lead that new United Nations entity. Luxembourg will continue to be a steadfast partner and contributor in the struggle to implement Goals 3, 4 and 5, as well as the objectives in the field of health in general, including through increased attention to non-communicable diseases.

The mission we want to accomplish by 2015 has been considerably complicated by new realities that were unknown, and even unimaginable, in 2000. I am referring to the new global challenges arising from growing insecurity, from the pernicious effects of the global economic crisis, especially in developing countries, from climate change, and from migration. There is only one possible answer in this respect. No one has ever claimed that things would be easy. For Luxembourg, that is no reason to give up.

The world is changing, sometimes because of our own irresponsible actions. New challenges, however, do not free us from our past promises and commitments, especially since we are all affected by these new challenges, which know no administrative and natural boundaries. This awareness is unprecedented, and thus precious. We now have to react appropriately. The times of cubicled reflections and actions, with everybody in their own little realm of competences and responsibilities, have to end if we want to be effective.

That is why the Luxembourg Government calls — at the national level, within the European Union, at the United Nations and through its normal relations with its developing partner countries — for responses that rely on the added value of a regional and trans-sectoral approach. Indeed, in the Sahel region, local development suffers from the combined effects of food insecurity due to climate change and from criminal and terrorist attacks. In the Pacific and the Caribbean, the hope for foreign direct investment is waning with the rise of sea levels and the worsening of hurricanes.

Migration flows have reached unprecedented levels and, far from raising the standards of living of those who leave, on the one hand they drain part of the work force from the countries of origin and, on the other, they create administrative and human dilemmas for the countries of destination.

Our responses to complex and intertwined challenges do not have to be perfectly integrated, but the better we coordinate them, across and beyond the different areas of competence, the more effective they become. In this respect, it is not only possible but imperative to be creative.

The long way ahead and the huge task that remains to be accomplished force us, North and South alike, to use every means at our disposal to start keeping our promises to the poorest and, for the sake of each and every one of us, to consider new partnerships,

especially with civil society and the private sector; new alternative and sustainable sources of financing for development; and mutually beneficial channels to organize the transfer of funds, goods and services in the context of a globalization that benefits all.

Luxembourg has been committed to this for years as a trustworthy partner and donor, allocating 1 per cent of its gross national income to official development assistance. This is what we have advocated in our presidency of the Economic and Social Council and within the Peacebuilding Commission, and what we continue to advocate in the European Union and in the Organisation for Economic CoOperation and Development. It is what will continue to guide us in Cancún later this year and as a member of the Security Council, if we are given the opportunity to hold a non-permanent seat in 2013-2014.

Luxembourg does not make such promises in a vacuum. We have ourselves in the past benefited from international solidarity, regional integration and full participation in the global economy, and are therefore fully aware that sustainable development is never achieved for good, that the time at our disposal until 2015 is limited, and that we have to make the best possible use of it.

Finally, let me add my voice to those who have recalled that 2015 is only one step mid-journey on the road to the eradication of poverty. Indeed, without losing sight of the intermediary objectives of the MDGs, it is essential to start thinking now about the post-2015 period.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alberto Gaitmaitan Romulo, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Romulo (Philippines): The Philippines is one with the world in seeking to keep the promise of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

Ten years after the Millennium Summit that crafted the MDGs, our country has made considerable strides towards meeting most of its targets. The Philippines is on track to meet the targets on child mortality, malaria and tuberculosis incidence, increasing access to sanitation and safe and potable water, and providing equal education for girls.

However, despite the gains made in the last decade, we need to push ourselves further to meet the MDGs, particularly in the areas where we are lagging behind. Moreover, the Philippine scenario is characterized by wide disparities. Our latest progress report also shows that climate change poses a threat to the achievement of our targets. The population above the poverty threshold is declining as a result of low capacities to cope with the effects of shocks, leading to more transient poor.

It has been over two months since our country had a peaceful transition of power. The fresh mandate of the people has given the Government the needed political will for reforms. The new Administration's cornerstone of good and effective governance will be a potent force in addressing the challenges impeding the attainment of the MDGs by 2015. Thus, it is crucial for the Philippines to eradicate graft and corruption so that public resources can be efficiently channelled into attaining the MDGs.

The Philippine Government will unveil its medium-term development plan for the period 2010-2016. The policies and strategies outlined will reflect our commitment to prioritizing the MDGs. The plan will make sure that growth will be shared with the poor and the vulnerable by paving the way for access by every Filipino to quality health care, education and employment through an appropriate mix of physical and social infrastructure and by strengthening social safety nets, such as conditional cash transfers and universal health care.

Regional dimensions and dynamics are taken into account in the medium-term development plan to address development disparities. Future regional development plans will contain localized targets and strategies in the regions.

We will focus on measures to adapt to the global effects of climate change. As an archipelago with a diverse ecology, the Philippines is highly vulnerable to disasters. Periodic natural disasters increase the vulnerability of poor Filipinos, thus derailing our efforts to reduce poverty and achieve the MDGs. We will integrate climate change adaptation strategies and measures to protect what we have already achieved and continue our work towards meeting the MDG targets. We urge all United Nations Member States also to take the necessary action to adapt to climate change and to help fellow citizens of this Earth cope with its effects.

The Philippines has always recognized the role of the various stakeholders in the MDGs. Our medium-

term development plan aims to harness partnerships between the public and private sectors, including those in civil society, the business and private sectors, academia, the media, religious groups and our international development partners. We will put in place an enabling environment for those stakeholders so that the results of the MDGs will be felt even in remote areas. We will also ensure that environmental sustainability is not compromised in the process of economic growth.

The legislative branch is also proactive in building the legal foundations for the MDGs. The Philippine House of Representatives set up the Special Committee on Millennium Development Goals, which prioritizes measures concerning the MDGs.

In line with our MDG strategies, we will also ask the United Nations system to share its knowledge of successful development approaches in other countries, particularly in areas where we lag behind, such as reducing poverty and hunger, school dropout rates, maternal deaths and HIV/AIDS cases.

Finally, as developing countries struggle to achieve the MDGs, it is essential that international development partners keep their promise. Four decades ago, privileged nations pledged to share a small portion of their gross national income with developing countries. As 2015 draws near, we urge those economically advanced countries to fulfil their commitments.

As we enter the last stretch, the Philippine Government is exerting all means to deliver on its promise to realize its MDGs, not just as an international commitment but because our people demand it. Let us remember that each and every one of our citizens deserves a life of quality, meaning and dignity.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa.

Ms. Nkoana-Mashabane (South Africa): Ten years have passed since our Heads of State and Government took a bold and historic step by committing their nations, among other things, to cut extreme poverty by half and to empower women, children and other vulnerable groups. The eight goals defined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are central to the mission of the United Nations in its advancement of development, peace and human rights in the world. Indeed, today, the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly has been convened five years ahead of the target date of 2015 to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

For South Africa, the conception of the MDGs dovetailed with the development approach that had already been adopted by our Government at the end of apartheid, which is embedded in the constitutional provisions, including our Bill of Rights. Since our independence in 1994, successive Government programmes have focused on improving the living conditions of our people by channelling substantial resources into the areas of education, basic health care, housing and basic services, such as water, electricity, sanitation and social security benefits. Of note in that regard are the construction and transfer of more than 1.8 million houses to the poor, in addition to the restoring of full ownership to long-term occupants of houses in historically black residential townships.

In our effort to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals, we have included them into a set of 10 national priorities anchored on the creation of jobs, the improvement of health care, access to quality education for all, the eradication of crime and the uplift of our rural communities.

During the 2010 International Federation of Association Football World Cup, President Jacob Zuma launched the One Goal education campaign to strategically draw attention to the MDGs. We will continue to provide whatever support we can to the Millennium Development Goals advocacy campaign.

Our own national assessment of the state of progress in achieving the MDGs, which is described in the country reports that we have produced since 2005, the third of which has just been released, gives a clear picture of our satisfactory achievements, especially with regard to MDGs 1, 2, 3 and 8. However, we are aware of the challenges posed by MDGs 4, 5 and 6, relating to health, and we have established strong Government programmes, the initial results of which are encouraging and have been confirmed by United Nations agencies.

Therefore, going forward towards 2015, we intend to intensify the partnerships that we have built to support the implementation of the MDGs, including

the role of our civil society. Such efforts will entail making more resources available to our relevant State institutions and improving their delivery capacity, especially with regard to interventions on HIV and AIDS.

We believe that the MDGs should be an integral part of our comprehensive, long-term development strategy. Our focus on quantifiable targets in education and health, for instance, must be accompanied by dedicated attention to improving the quality of the public goods we deliver. The MDGs must also help close the gap between the rich and the poor within countries and across the world.

We wish to reaffirm the special needs of Africa, as reflected in a number of United Nations documents. Africa has made significant progress over the last decade. Sadly, despite our noble intentions, the enabling conditions for a true global partnership for development have not yet materialized. Through Goal 8 of the MDGs, on global partnership for development, the international community recognized that measures at the country level aimed at achieving the MDGs would be significantly enhanced by our collective effort, working together, to lift our people out of the scourge of poverty, disease and underdevelopment.

With only five years left to achieve the MDGs, all nations need a far greater sense of urgency if the targets are to be met. South Africa is concerned by the fact that progress in achieving the MDGs in Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, remains the slowest. If Africa fails to achieve the MDGs, the world will have indeed failed.

We are indeed aware that the international community is currently faced with multiple and interrelated crises that put an enormous burden on countries, particularly in the developing South. However, those multiple crises must not dampen our determination to deliver on our commitments. Instead, they must be a clarion call to all of us to do more, working together, for a better life and a better world for all our people. We must respond to the Secretary-General's challenge to mobilize the $100 billion needed to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

I wish to join those who have spoken before me in calling on all developed countries to say that now is the time to deliver on their official development assistance commitments. Our people across the world are watching to see whether we will be able to galvanize international action to achieve the MDGs by the target date. Our actions coming out of this gathering must demonstrate our political will and determination to fulfil the promises we made 10 years ago. We must come out of this Meeting united and re-energized, to redouble our efforts towards the 2015 goals.

The Acting Chair: I now call on Mr. Micheál Martin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland.

Mr. Martin (Ireland): We meet as the political representatives of a global community. Our purpose is to account to each other for our actions over the past 10 years in the fight against poverty and hunger. In adopting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we set ourselves clear targets to measure progress up to 2015. The Goals represent a declaration of collective responsibility for the lives and futures of the poorest and most vulnerable people on the planet.

The Goals are at the heart of Ireland's development programme and foreign policy. They represent a fundamental partnership between developing and developed nations. They require collective joint action to mobilize resources for development.

One essential element is the provision by richer countries of official development assistance (ODA). Since Ireland signed up to the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) in 2000, we have tripled the annual volume of our assistance. We have provided €6 billion in ODA over the decade, and the Irish people have privately donated many millions more. The Government of Ireland is committed to the international target of spending 0.7 per cent of our gross national income on overseas assistance by 2015.

We have lessons to learn from the past 10 years of collective and individual action. There have been major successes in combating extreme poverty, in improving the levels of enrolment in primary schools, in child health and in the treatment of HIV and AIDS. However, the actual numbers of people living in poverty and hunger continue to increase. It is also clear that some countries and regions have made progress while others have not. Without additional efforts and a more collaborative approach we will fail to meet some of the most important targets we have agreed on.

The challenge is accentuated by global economic uncertainty and the growing impact of global

challenges, notably climate change. The economic crisis has simultaneously increased poverty in already poor communities and has imposed pressure on aid budgets in the developed world. In these circumstances, we have a duty to examine rigorously the effectiveness of our policies and actions and to focus sharply on key sectors.

Since the launch of Ireland's Hunger Task Force Report at the United Nations two years ago, we have worked with partners to galvanize global attention on the crisis of world hunger. We believe that failure to address the crisis is impeding progress across the full range of MDGs.

The number of chronically hungry people has risen in recent years to some one billion. One in four children under five in the developing world is undernourished. The hungry child becomes in turn the underachieving pupil and the vulnerable and impoverished mother or father. Undernourishment is one of the world's most serious problems — and yet proven, low-cost interventions exist to address it. They will not be mobilized effectively unless we as political leaders mobilize the political will to do so.

Today, with the United States Administration, we hosted a meeting of international leaders committed to building a partnership that will focus on nutrition in the vital first one thousand days of life, from pregnancy to second birthday. We recognized the vital role of the Secretary-General's Scaling Up Nutrition initiative. We are now committed to creating partnerships at all levels to support comprehensive action on nutrition. Our determination is to accelerate progress on the first of the MDGs: to halve the proportion of people suffering from extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

Progress on the MDGs has been unbalanced and uneven. The Secretary-General has pointed out that aid to Africa lags far behind commitments and far behind needs. While in some regions progress is made on maternal mortality, hundreds of thousands of African women continue to die needlessly due to complications in childbirth. There is similar evidence across a range of development indicators.

We need a stronger collective focus on countries and regions that are making the least progress. We in Ireland are already directing more than 80 per cent of our development programme to sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on social protection for vulnerable communities, infant and child nutrition, innovative agricultural research and building capacity to engage in economic activity.

Our partner countries are at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals. They must set their own priorities for economic growth and poverty reduction. We must reaffirm our commitment to more effective partnerships between developed and developing countries. The priorities must be country ownership; use of fair, democratic and transparent national systems; and accountability to each other and to our people.

The United Nations has rallied the world behind the Millennium Development Goals and is crucial to their achievement. We have been heartened by the agreement in recent months to establish the new gender entity, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and we will support its work in promoting the rights, well-being and empowerment of women worldwide.

The United Nations can play a stronger role in ensuring that resources for global development are deployed effectively. This means an end to duplication of effort, a strengthening of coordination on the ground, a trustworthy system of monitoring and evaluation, and an unrelenting focus on the achievement of clear development results. We all have an obligation to demonstrate clearly and publicly that every cent raised to fight poverty and hunger is used to full effect.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Ireland's commitment to the ideals, aspirations and specific targets set out in the MDGs. They reflect our values as a people. We remain determined to work in partnership for their achievement.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Djibouti.

Mr. Youssouf (Djibouti): It was a hopeful and inspiring moment when the world's leaders at the Millennium Summit of 2000 pledged to meet aid goals critical to the development of the world's poorest countries. The list of restraints and constraints to development continuously faced by the least developed countries remains large as the projected date of completion draws ever closer.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent the most widely agreed commitments of world leaders ever undertaken in the framework of the United Nations. Addressing extreme poverty, hunger and disease; promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability; and building a new global partnership for development — these goals represent a vision of concrete and measurable achievements; not mere inspirations, but tangible outcomes.

That is why we are assembled here today to take stock of our progress and to help us make decisions to meet the Goals by the 2015 deadline. We welcome the upcoming adoption of the draft outcome document (A/65/L.1) as an important reaffirmation of the international consensus in the field of international partnership for development and for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

My country, Djibouti, has adopted the MDGs as our primary national development goals and integrated them into our development targets. We have introduced an ambitious and comprehensive social development agenda to improve the welfare and living standards of the vulnerable sectors of our society.

We have made significant progress since independence, and particularly in the last decade, towards reaching a very high primary school enrolment rate for girls. Despite our limited resources, we have always striven hard to provide universal health coverage for our people. Again, against the background of severe financial constraints, we continue to provide full free education up to the tertiary level, including extensive scholarship programmes. Through the encouragement of free prenatal health check-ups and compulsory vaccinations, we have achieved significant progress in maternal and child health. Over the years, through the strenuous and conscious efforts of the Government and thanks to continuous accessing of long-term concessionary development loans, thousands of houses have been built in order to redress the chronic shortage in this area. Overall, we continue to undertake consistent measures to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS and provide access to free medical attention for those who need it.

The prevailing extent of global poverty is unacceptable, confronting us with the moral imperative to act and to realize the MDGs by 2015. Achieving the MDGs remains feasible with adequate commitment, policies, resources and efforts. Collectively and individually, we must strive hard to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth that creates employment and improves the livelihood of the people. A renewed commitment is needed from all of us.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda.

Mr. Kutesa (Uganda): In September 2000, we unanimously adopted the comprehensive Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), committing our nations to a partnership for a peaceful, prosperous and just world. The driving force of this partnership lies in combating the causes and effects of poverty through the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The achievement of the MDGs and our quest for sustainable development and peace cannot, however, be separated. This is even more so in developing countries. Strategies for achieving the MDGs must necessarily be anchored in strategic national and regional economic and socio-economic objectives. If we are to be able to celebrate the achievement of the MDGs in 2015, the acceleration of economic modernization and socio-economic transformation must receive our utmost attention and effort.

Poverty is first and foremost a development challenge. Accelerating progress towards meeting the MDGs therefore demands that we do more than just appease our conscience through scattered relief and aid efforts. It demands that we marshal national and global efforts to address the glaring infrastructural deficits facing developing countries, where the vast majority of the poor are found.

It is encouraging to note that 11 of the 20 countries making the most absolute progress towards achieving the MDGs in the world are among the poorest in the world, and that many are located in Africa. Poverty has been reduced in two-thirds of low- and middle-income countries and in over three-quarters of African countries. It is equally encouraging to note that extreme poverty in developing countries has fallen since the mid-1990s. Throughout Africa, however, the progress on reducing hunger has been slow, although there are wide disparities among countries. It is shameful and immoral that, despite these positive developments, there are still more than a billion people

living in situations of extreme poverty around the world, the majority of whom are in the least developed countries.

This Assembly will note that having a billion hungry people among us is more than just a food crisis. It is a political crisis that requires strong and urgent political action. We also note that hunger has devastating downstream effects on economic development, health and education, since undernourished people cannot stay healthy and unhealthy people are less productive. Missing the target of reducing extreme hunger therefore puts the entire effort to achieve the MDGs at risk.

This High-level Meeting is therefore an important opportunity for world leaders to take decisive action in fulfilling the outstanding promises of the Millennium Declaration. We must not fail the billions who look to the international community to fulfil the world's promises in the five years that remain before 2015.

As far as national progress on the MDGs is concerned, Uganda, like many other developing countries, has made substantial progress towards achieving the MDGs. Our 2010 country report on the MDGs reveals that we have registered progress in 15 of the 21 MDG targets, with seven on track for achievement. With continued focus on our broad strategy of economic transformation and modernization and our strong commitment to regional integration, we believe that we shall register further progress in each of the MDGs.

Modest progress has been made on improving child health, maternal health, access to reproductive health services, and combating malaria and HIV/AIDS. Despite this progress, challenges still exist. There is a need to strengthen health systems and ensure multisectoral collaboration. In the area of HIV/AIDS, we are concerned that our past successes in fighting the epidemic are being slowed down by the increase in new infections that recent data suggest.

As in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, constrained access to modern sources of energy continues to cause degradation of Uganda's natural resources and biodiversity. This degradation has a heavy impact on the livelihoods of the poor by constraining their ability to increase their incomes and by making them more vulnerable.

Looking forward, there are critical factors, other than those I have mentioned, that we must address if we are to accelerate progress towards achieving the MDGs. First, we need to pay more attention to strengthening education in and application of science and technology in developing countries, failing which these countries will continue to register low productivity in all sectors. The international community needs to rally around the universities and scientists in developing countries who are involved in innovation and the application of science and technology in the various sectors of those countries' economies.

Secondly, developing countries must focus more on investing in key economic infrastructure that will spur economic growth and job creation. The population in developing countries is expanding fast. Aid, with its biased focus on social sectors, cannot provide sustainable solutions to the long-term demands of children and young people in developing countries or to their expectation of a better life than that of their parents. Now is also the time for development partners to rethink and reconsider their aid priorities in favour of supporting regional economic integration amongst developing countries.

Thirdly, many developing countries, especially in Africa, continue to suffer an acute shortage of skills. Human resources in African countries, although educated, lack the requisite skills for engaging productively in the labour market. While we continue to focus on the attainment of MDG 2, on achieving universal primary education, we need to maintain an even more strategic focus on the employability of the graduates of our primary education systems. This will require a renewed focus on promoting and expanding access to technical and vocational training within our education sectors.

I wish to stress that we in Uganda view the Millennium Development Goals as the strict minimum, indeed as basic goals. I hope that we can all agree that our people clearly deserve more than what is merely basic. It is the intention of the Government of Uganda to spur economic growth in the country with the aim of eliminating poverty and achieving sustainable development. Only that way will we have served our people well.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Adelino Mano Queta,

Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Queta (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; French text provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour for Guinea-Bissau to take part in this global forum, an ideal setting for the exchange of experience among countries on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

I take this opportunity to reiterate the political will and commitment of the Government of my country to further strengthening its work in all spheres in order to achieve the goals set, in spite of the enormous difficulties. Guinea-Bissau is deeply committed to revising its national poverty reduction strategy, whose main goal is to significantly and lastingly reduce poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

This initiative is part of a serious effort to encourage economic growth. Despite the importance accorded to stability and security, it is clear today that it is equally essential to accelerate economic growth, particularly in sectors that employ the poorest, diversify the economy, improve macroeconomic management and consolidate administrative reform with a view to guaranteeing the provision of basic services such as education, health care, safe drinking water and sanitation.

The initial results of a number of studies and investigations seem to suggest a certain improvement in a number of social indicators. Nevertheless, the extremely high level of maternal and infant mortality leads us to conclude that MDGs 4 and 5 will not be fully reached. That is why it is necessary to take urgent steps so that we can achieve all the Goals. The Government is aware of the situation and has therefore launched a campaign on accelerated reduction of maternal mortality in Africa, whose goal is to reduce neonatal, maternal and infant mortality, as well as an accelerated programme to ensure the survival of children.

The Government's capacity for initiatives is also visible in the promotion of gender equality. For instance, in parallel with the enrolment of young girls, three draft laws have been introduced on reproductive health, gender-based violence and human trafficking. These initiatives can succeed only through the urgent allocation of additional resources by stakeholders.

For Guinea-Bissau, strengthening a genuine partnership for development involves the Government, regional institutions, the United Nations system, civil society and bilateral partners. Such strengthening is crucial if we are to raise the country's level of development.

Concerning the thorny issue of resource mobilization, which continues to mortgage our chances of attaining the MDGs, we have launched an appeal for solidarity from our development partners. The commitments assumed as part of such historic initiatives as the Monterrey Consensus of March 2002; the Group of Eight's Gleneagles appeal of July 2005, with a view to doubling the flow of aid to Africa; or more recently still, the Group of 20 resolutions in favour of low-income countries, must be honoured. Without these commitments, the major gains made by our countries at the cost of major sacrifice on the path to development and poverty reduction could be jeopardized forever.

The situation was already precarious, and the crisis has only made it worse in the majority of our countries. According to World Bank data, 71 million people, including 20 million Africans, who were initially seen as emerging from poverty by 2015 will still be suffering because of the crisis.

For the same reason, by 2015 55,000 additional children will lose their lives, around 350,000 pupils will be unable to finish their primary education, and another 10 million people will still not have access to potable water. In that context we hail the efforts to increase resources that for many of our countries represent the only possibility to finance their economies. We take this opportunity to urge our development partners to work towards a successful outcome of the discussions under way on replenishing the resources of the Agency for International Development, the World Bank Group and the African Development Fund.

In my Government's development programme, biodiversity is considered a natural heritage as well as a vital source for humanity. That is why the Government has made considerable efforts to achieve the MDGs through taking steps to create a network of protected sites, drafting plans of action for endangered species, and environmental education and communications programmes adapted to the realities of the country. Close cooperation with a view to a

partnership for development has been assured with the international financial institutions, including, inter alia, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and regional and subregional organizations including the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

In conclusion, permit me to wish all success for our endeavours.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Minister for External Relations of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Mahamat (Chad) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, allow me to extend our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his initiative to organize this high-level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals.

Chad committed itself to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, all the more in that they were already part of our Government programme. Furthermore, we adopted a growth and poverty reduction strategy that remains today the best cooperation framework to unite all the national and international efforts directed primarily towards achieving the Goals.

Unfortunately, in recent years the country has seen many armed incursions that have slowed the significant progress we had made in areas that directly affect poverty reduction. The eastern and southern areas of the country are sheltering more than 250 million refugees from both Darfur and the Central African Republic. That massive presence in an environment that was already precarious is a major challenge that must be resolved. Natural disasters, great droughts and food crises continuously affect the countries of the Sahel and remain real handicaps for our attainment of the Goals and especially for financing for our development strategies.

However, the major concern undeniably remains the harmful consequences of climate change throughout the world in general and in the developing countries in particular. The latter are the poorest and most vulnerable, and without doubt they suffer the effects on the climate caused by the major greenhouse gas producers — the industrialized countries. We experience those harmful effects daily as the worst catastrophe for our environment, our agriculture and our livestock — in short, for the life of our people. At that rate, conducting activities for sustainable development is not at all easy.

The most striking example is the risk that Lake Chad might disappear completely. In 40 years the Lake's surface area has shrunk from 25,000 square kilometers to less than 2,500. In October my country will host the eighth World Forum on Sustainable Development with a view to saving Lake Chad. Chad hopes for massive participation on the part of the international community in that forum, because preserving Lake Chad should be a global concern.

In spite of all those challenges, Chad continues to progress, with the help of its partners, by carrying out meaningful actions, becoming party to international conventions and agreements on the environment and drafting texts on the environment and incorporating them into the national plan.

In June we hosted the first summit of the Big Green Wall programme, which was organized at the initiative of the countries of the Sahel. The honour to host the meeting was bestowed on my country because of its pioneering role in large-scale reforestation in the region. In 2009 we started the national Green Belt programme to plant over 16 million trees a year throughout the country. Moreover, Chad decided to ban the cutting of trees to make charcoal. That measure, however difficult for households, is essential for the preservation of our ecosystem. Through those two programmes and that initiative, we intend to promote socio-economic development in target areas that are vulnerable to desertification by implementing programmes to preserve and restore natural resources and to encourage economic activity.

But beyond the subregional aspects, those programmes fit in perfectly with global efforts to fight the harmful effects of climate change, and thus they deserve the support of the international community. By supporting the efforts of our countries to implement their development strategies, the international community will be able to resolve the problems of sustainable development. Respect for the commitments made at Monterrey is part of this effort to support financing for sustainable development.

In conclusion, I would like to reassure the Assembly that Chad will abide by its international

commitments and will work together with the international community to make our planet a healthy place and a good place to live.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Diénabou Saifon Diallo, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of the Republic of Guinea.

Ms. Diallo (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to welcome the heads of State and Government, delegations of the Member States and the representatives of international organizations and to convey to them the profound gratitude of the people and Government of Guinea for all their unwavering support with a view to the return of constitutional order and the holding of free, transparent and democratic presidential elections in Guinea.

Allow me also to join my voice to those who spoke before me in voicing my delegation's gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General, for his tremendous ongoing efforts at the head of our Organization.

My delegation's statement will cover two issues. The first concerns an assessment of progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Guinea and, the second, financing for development.

Like other countries, Guinea, with conviction and hope, fully endorsed the MDGs in September 2000. Since then, our Government, with the support of its development partners, in particular the United Nations system, has made laudable efforts towards the realization of the MDGs. These efforts have allowed us to make progress in the fields of education, gender equality, child health and HIV, and certain targets could well be achieved by 2015. On the other hand, in the fields of poverty reduction, food security and environmental sustainability, progress is inadequate.

Overall, the possibility of achieving the MDGs has decreased, particularly in recent years, due to the combined affect of a number of factors, including most particularly the general context of the country dominated as it has been by a severe political crisis, a marked deterioration in the quality of governance and a drastic fall in foreign aid. Without an improvement of the political context and renewed momentum in the economic and social development process, we risk missing the 2015 deadline for achieving most of the Goals and targets. According to a 2006-2007 needs assessment study on Guinea's MDG progress, the approximate cost of the necessary resources for the achievement of its objectives was estimated to be $12.254 billion for the period 2006-2015, or an annual average of $1.234 billion or $110 per capita.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our appeal for a more sustained commitment and a bolstered partnership in the international covenant to achieve the MDGs.

Concerning financing for development in general, this issue is crucial for Africa. According to a variety of assessments, the negative impact of multiple crises, particularly on the 33 least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa and the 49 LDCs throughout the world, will make the continent unable to achieve the MDGs by 2015, in particular due to a lack of official development assistance. It is therefore vital that this summit consider every possible regular and supplementary source of financing for development. In this regard, innovative financing is increasingly emerging as an important tool for marshalling additional, predictable and stable resources to complement official development assistance.

To this end, Guinea would like to submit for consideration two proposals whose goal is to increase resources for financing for development for Africa by 2015 and beyond. These are the organization of an African conference on innovative financing and the preparation of a draft African declaration on transparency of financial governance and the fight against illicit flows of capital.

An African conference on innovative financing would allow us to consider strategies for mobilizing innovative financing in order to complement traditional official development assistance and the domestic resources necessary for funding the MDGs. Concerning the draft African declaration on transparency of financial governance and the struggle against illicit flows of capital, its objective would be to stem the exodus of huge amounts of capital from Africa in order to devote it to the continent's development.

These proposals were well received in various African agencies and by the pilot group, and were endorsed by the heads of State and Government attending the Twenty-Fifth Africa-France Summit, and by the African Union at its fifteenth summit in Kampala. At the same time, the proposed organization of an African conference on innovative financing was

subject to consultations from 5 to 16 July 2010 with partner institutions. My country has presented its candidature to host the conference in March 2012 in its capital, Conakry, parallel with the fifth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. My delegation would like this project to be taken into account by the international community and included among the proposals for action to be presented for the benefit of Africa during the deliberations of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

In conclusion, the Republic of Guinea seeks the support of Member States in order to attain this objective.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Rassoul (Afghanistan): Ten years ago, Member States gathered in this Assembly to take an unprecedented step. Through the adoption of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), we asserted our shared responsibility to humanity and committed to making tangible progress in improving the lives of human beings around the world.

In addition to being a moral imperative, the Declaration also recognized the crucial link between the well-being of individuals and the stability and health of societies and States. Through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we committed ourselves to addressing some of the world's most difficult and pressing development issues, including poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation, and the promotion of gender equality, education and health. Ten years later, these are still the main challenges facing our people and our countries.

At the time of the Millennium Declaration's adoption in 2000, Afghanistan was cut off, isolated from the international community by the abhorrent Taliban regime, which denied the Afghan people even the most fundamental human rights and allowed terrorists to use Afghan soil to launch attacks around the world. In 2001, with the overthrow of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan slowly began to rebuild its shattered political, economic and social structures, and to regain its rightful place in the community of nations.

Our country undertook a series of policies aimed at a comprehensive reconstruction and stabilization of the political and economic situation, both nationally and regionally. These policies centred on the urgent need to raise the Afghan people out of grinding poverty and to provide them with the basic human rights, opportunities and services that had been denied them for decades.

Afghanistan has made enormous strides in the past decade, emerging from the ruins of war to build a more functioning Government, a more prosperous economy, and a more healthy society. Just three days ago, Afghanistan held its second parliamentary elections. Millions of Afghans from all walks of life braved a challenging security situation and cast their votes to elect representatives to the National Assembly. The unprecedented number of women candidates, voters and elected representatives is a clear demonstration of how far Afghan women have come in regaining their proactive role in Afghan society.

The elections reaffirmed the steadfast commitment of the Afghan people to democracy and self-determination. Our leadership will continue to focus on good governance and to introduce institutional reforms that will make us more responsive to the needs and concerns of the vibrant Afghan civil society and population.

Economically, 80 per cent of Afghans depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, and, along with other agricultural reforms, we have undertaken comprehensive efforts to rebuild and repair irrigation systems and constructed over 10,000 kilometres of roads. These changes have improved productivity in the agricultural and trade sectors, which boosted our gross domestic product to record highs of 22.5 per cent growth this year. The average income has quadrupled since 2001. This year for the first time, Government revenue surpassed $1 billion. The recent discovery of enormous mineral resources, combined with potential trade and transit opportunities with our neighbours, provides an opportunity to raise the Afghan people from poverty and offers a sound basis for future prosperity.

Afghanistan's health and education sectors have also developed significantly, thanks in large part to the assistance of our international partners, including this Organization. We have established hundreds of clinics and hospitals across the country, expanding basic

health coverage from 9 per cent of the population in 2003 to close to 90 per cent this year. Our national immunization campaign is in full swing, reaching out to millions of children under the age of five to protect them against polio and other deadly diseases. We have made substantial improvements in reducing infant and under-five mortality rates. In addition, we have a 71 per cent school enrolment rate of Afghan boys and girls. As part of our national agenda to promote primary, secondary and higher education, we have constructed close to 4,000 school buildings over the past nine years. We are on track to build an additional 4,900 by the end of 2013.

We are also building a complex social safety net, geared towards finding work for those willing and able and supporting those who are unable to care for themselves.

We must keep in mind the backdrop of severe fragility and conflict when assessing the success of Afghanistan in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Security is the bedrock for socio-economic development. The difficult security situation in Afghanistan has challenged our ability to sustain progress. The enemies of peace and stability in Afghanistan are still active, orchestrating attacks against schools, clinics, teachers, doctors, Government employees and even young children, particularly schoolgirls.

Unfortunately, similar attacks continue against humanitarian aid organizations and their personnel, who are working under difficult conditions to improve the lives of ordinary Afghans. In recognition of the crucial role of security in providing space for development, I would like to emphasize our addition of security to Afghanistan's list of MDGs. Improvements in security over the past year include substantial progress in clearing landmines and reducing poppy cultivation.

While we have made significant improvements, Afghanistan remains the country with the lowest income in the region, with 40 per cent of its population unemployed and 36 per cent living in poverty. We still face a gender gap in literacy and education. For those reasons, we realize more than ever the importance of our international partners in supporting our country. Our budget for development is entirely financed by aid. We hope to continue the transition towards streamlining aid more effectively through the Government of Afghanistan, with a view towards sustainability and capacity building. We have designed an extensive plan for Millennium Development Goals and targets over the next decade.

While we know that the path ahead is a difficult one, we are determined to forge on with a view towards reaching our MDG commitments. Our number one priority as a Government is to bring an end to the conflict. The Afghan people are thirsty for peace. The Afghan National Army and Police are being trained and equipped to take responsibility for the Afghan people. The Afghan Government is simultaneously undertaking a broad political outreach initiative to offer a new beginning to former combatants and others willing to lay down arms and embrace a peaceful life.

In addition, in order to focus on the most pressing issues, the Afghan Government recently identified five key areas in the Afghan national development strategy that will require close attention: agricultural development and rural rehabilitation, human resources development, economic and infrastructure development, governance and security.

Our recent Kabul conference was a milestone in greater Afghan leadership, particularly when it comes to security, governance and development. At the Kabul Conference, we presented our comprehensive development agenda, aimed at implementing tangible improvements in the lives of our citizens. Over the coming years, our Government will push for a transition to greater Afghan responsibility and leadership in security, social and economic development and governance.

We are aware of the challenges we face. More than 3 billion people worldwide live on less than $2.50 a day. Far too many are denied access to food, shelter, water and other necessities of life. But Afghanistan is well aware, perhaps more than many, of exactly how much we can accomplish when we work together. Our responsibility as world leaders and as human beings is to persevere in our quest to improve the lives of our fellow citizens. I am convinced that, with commitment and focus, we will succeed.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fayssal Al-Mekdad, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Ten years have passed since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, in which we set out the international community's vision for the new millennium. Unfortunately, facts and statistics show that the results have not come up to our expectations. Targets have yet to be met. Poverty, hunger and epidemics are rampant throughout the world. Tension and occupation continue to threaten international peace and security. In those circumstances, development for people in lands under Israeli occupation in the Middle East cannot be achieved.

The 2000 Millennium Declaration reflected the international consensus on promoting sustainable development, combating poverty and protecting the environment. The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — namely, reducing the number of people suffering from hunger and famine, providing primary education to all in every country, improving the status of women, lowering the rate of infant mortality, reducing maternal mortality and halting the spread of AIDS and malaria — constituted the common denominator shared by States Members of the United Nations in addressing the challenges confronting humankind.

A brief look at the achievements in the decade since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration prompt us to say that the most basic elements of development — humankind's sense of security, peace and liberation — have not been met. In our region, Israel continues to occupy Palestine, whose people languish under occupation and suffer from hunger, poverty and repression. More than half a million Syrians have been pushed by Israel out of the occupied Golan, far from their land. About 20,000 remain languishing under occupation.

How can development and the MDGs be achieved in such circumstances? If it is true, as Israel claims and as we heard yesterday, that science and innovation have replaced land as the source of wealth, why does Israel not withdraw from the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territory under its occupation? Much of the suffering in our region, in particular with regard to the failure to achieve the MDGs, can be blamed on Israel's aggressive policies and its continuing occupation of our land. It must be emphasized that Syria's demand for peace does not involve concessions by Israel. Instead, it means returning all usurped lands to their rightful owners.

Syria renews its commitment to the peace option as the only means of ensuring security, stability and progress in the Middle East. We believe that peace can only take root if it is a just peace that re-establishes the full right of all people on the basis of resolutions of international legitimacy. We also believe that resuming peace negotiations requires clear foundations and guarantees to implement whatever is agreed.

The signs of some recovery in the international economic situation do not mean that the effects of the world financial and economic crisis have receded. Rather, the consequences of the crisis are being revealed on a daily basis, especially in the poor countries of the South. The number of poor people in those States is increasing, making it incumbent upon the United Nations and its Member States to continue to make the necessary efforts to coordinate the response to the crisis and its consequences in order to carry out a fundamental reform of the international economic and financial order so that the needs of developing countries and their peoples may be satisfied, ensuring their participation in economic and financial decision-making at the international level.

The Syrian economy has many strong points. It is a diversified economy. We focus on the real economy while also paying attention to the service economy. That is in addition to the positive results we have achieved in our successive five-year plans for Syria's development. The means used to respond to the international economic crisis have proved, more than ever before, that the State has a fundamental role to play in ensuring oversight of economic and financial systems at the national and international levels. The Syrian Government has sought to lessen the negative effects of the economic and financial crisis on our national economy by adopting a series of decisions that have had a positive effect on domestic economic growth. However, with regard to the MDGs, the following points must be emphasized.

First, unilateral economic measures imposed by some developed States against a number of developing countries undermine the world economic order. They hamper the efforts made by developing countries to build their economies and address the world economic and financial crisis, to say nothing of achieving lasting sustainable development. In that regard, I must point out that unilateral sanctions are imposed by some, without justification, on developing States like Syria

and Cuba, contrary to international trade laws and international law.

Secondly, developing countries continue to face a number of obstacles in attempting to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). A developing country might have to wait nine years while its request to join WTO is discussed. That certainly does not help to establish the appropriate international environment to support their efforts towards economic development and joining the world economy.

Thirdly, donor countries must honour their commitments to supporting development in the South. In addition, South-South cooperation must be increased. It is also necessary for the countries of the South to increase economic exchanges and harmonize their positions in international negotiations in order to defend their interests, promote their development and achieve the MDGs.

With five years remaining to achieve the MDGS, despite the limited success thus far, and as we affirmed in the Millennium Declaration, we renew our faith in international cooperation towards more peace, prosperity and justice in the world. Let us all rise together to the challenges we face. Let us work together for a better future for humankind, a future where the coming generations enjoy security, peace and well-being.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pak Kil Yon, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Pak Kil Yon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text provided by the delegation*): It was 10 years ago in this very forum that the United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted for a peaceful world free from war and poverty where all could flourish. Efforts by the international community have continued unabated for the past 10 years in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the practical programme of the Millennium Declaration.

It is regrettable that efforts have so far failed to reach the stage required for the development of developing countries. Louder voices calling for poverty eradication and sustainable development are coming from one side of the world, while from the other there is evidence of more militant behaviour, including armed invasions, military threats, sanctions and blockades targeted at sovereign States.

Even at this moment, fears are growing about the ever-worsening financial crisis, the increasing number and severity of natural disasters and the unusual climate changes that are manifest throughout the world. As a result, countries are faced with critical elements of instability and efforts to achieve the MDGs on time have been hampered by serious challenges.

With regard to the MDGs, it is imperative to establish a peaceful environment before anything else. If aggression and intervention continue against sovereign States and arms races intensify among world Powers, as we are witnessing today, the world will be further destabilized and overwhelmed by fear, leaving developing countries to suffer from hunger and poverty. It is therefore essential for the international community to make every effort to establish a peaceful environment by rejecting the use of force and removing threats of its use.

It is also imperative to adapt the existing inappropriate international economic architecture and create a sustainable environment so that the MDGs can be achieved on time. Financial and economic crises across the world in recent years have demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the current inequitable international economic architecture and have had a serious impact on the already vulnerable economies of developing countries. In such circumstances, the establishment of equitable international economic relations is urgently required. There must be no further delay.

International development strategies and policies, including the MDGs, should be geared towards assisting developing countries in their efforts to strengthen the self-reliance of their national economies and promote social justice and equality.

Enhancing the role of the United Nations is also important in the effort to achieve the MDGs. The United Nations should address the inappropriate elements of the international economic structure that have a negative impact on the development efforts of developing countries. It should also take steps to ensure an international environment that favours the achievement of the MDGs by urging the strict adherence of developed countries to their official development assistance commitments, removing inequitable trade barriers and establishing a new international financial system.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has now embarked on a new phase in the building of a great, prosperous and powerful nation under the leadership of the great General Kim Jong Il. Our goal of building such a nation is fully in accordance with the MDGs, as it implies a country with strong national power in which everything thrives and people enjoy well-being.

Major progress in terms of MDGs has already been made in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We have free medical care, free compulsory education and gender equality rights. We are now devoting ourselves to their consolidation and qualitative improvement. It is the unwavering will of the Government and people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to open the door to a great, prosperous and powerful nation by the year 2012, when we will mark the centennial anniversary of the birth of the great President Kim Il Sung.

Our efforts to build a great, prosperous and powerful nation require a durable peaceful environment. This is the sixtieth year since the outbreak of the Korean War. To mark the occasion, we have proposed to the parties concerned that talks be held on replacing the Korean Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty. Our proposal is aimed at removing the source of threats to peace and stability in the region, establishing a mechanism for lasting peace on the Korean peninsula and creating a peaceful environment to build the country's economy and improve people's living standards.

It is entirely thanks to the Songun politics of the great general Kim Jong Il that we are preserving peace and concentrating our efforts on building economic power in spite of the destabilized situation on the Korean peninsula. In the future, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will further expand and develop cooperation with all countries to build a peaceful and prosperous new world under a foreign policy of independence, peace and friendship. We will make an active contribution to the full achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Paulette Bethel, chair of the delegation of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): The Bahamas welcomes the opportunity to speak during this High-level Plenary Meeting, as it marks a pivotal point on the road to achieving the Goals we set out 10 years ago.

For the Bahamas, attaining and surpassing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) figure prominently in our national policy considerations. While the Bahamas has undertaken an array of activities in an effort to achieve the MDGs — and it is projected that the Bahamas will indeed achieve many of the goals and targets identified in the process — it is important to note that such assessments often do not adequately reflect the high vulnerability of our country and the macroeconomic, social and human development challenges that we face. That has been made utterly apparent by the deep and lasting impact of the global economic and financial crises in our country, as well as by the persistence of many social issues, including rising levels of transnational crime, non-communicable and other diseases and social instability.

In the face of these many challenges, the Bahamas has been able to achieve notable progress in meeting the MDGs. In fact, at the High-level Meeting on the MDGs that took place here at the United Nations two years ago, the Prime Minister of the Bahamas noted that we had not only achieved, but also surpassed, the goal regarding the elimination of poverty.

The Prime Minister also revealed that the Bahamas is able to ensure that every child from age five is able to attend school, and that we meet the yardstick of females being able to go to school and having equal access to education, as well as the yardstick of female participation on the issue of gender equality.

Prime Minister Ingraham added that, while more work needed to be done, the Bahamas is doing well in providing potable water throughout the country, in the treatment of HIV/AIDS and in the management of infant and maternal mortality rates.

The Bahamas, however, like so many countries of the Caribbean region, continues to confront significant challenges with respect to achieving certain targets, including those related to health and environmental sustainability, and generally in respect of capacity constraints and the collection of statistical data to support the work being done in the country. Moreover, other key factors, including the effects of the global economic and financial crisis and the adverse impacts

of climate change, threat :n to undermine the progress made thus far.

In view of these realities, we call for a greater sense of urgency in efforts to achieve the MDGs and to sustain the progress already made, particularly with respect to vulnerable countries like the Bahamas.

While national efforts are central in that regard, the role of the international community in complementing these efforts cannot be overstated. First and foremost, we must meet our commitments under the MDG process and mobilize the necessary resources to achieve the MDGs and to sustain the progress already made.

We also need to strengthen accountability frameworks at all levels — frameworks that consolidate global aid commitments, link them to results with timelines — and establish monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. In that connection, the importance of partnerships in complementing the work of Governments must also be highlighted. We must promote greater collaboration among Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, civil society and other stakeholders. We must also fully realize the interrelationship of efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and address the global economic and financial crisis and climate change.

While the draft outcome document (A/65/L.1) is certainly not as ambitious as we would have hoped in that regard, it represents hard-won consensus on key areas for accelerating the achievement of the MDGs. With these guiding principles, it is our hope that we meet the challenges of our time with the necessary political will and meaningful action at all levels in order to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, within the timelines we have set for ourselves.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, chair of the delegation of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, on behalf of Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, allow me to express our deep appreciation for the initiative of the Secretary-General and the President in convening a meeting at this critical point to reaffirm the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 10 years after their adoption, to review the agreed-upon will and determination to carry out their implementation, to assess what has been accomplished to date and to identify the hurdles to the implementation process.

The international financial and economic environment has experienced many negative developments, including increases in food and energy prices, worsening of the severe consequences of climate change and the impact of the economic and financial crisis which is affecting all countries. All this has served to hamper the ability of developing countries to achieve the MDGs by 2015, as agreed in the Millennium Declaration. The international community must therefore take urgent and unprecedented action to assist the global partnership for development by effectively addressing the repercussions of the crises, supporting the efforts of developing countries to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and improving those countries' capacity to meet emerging challenges.

In this regard, many developing countries, including Egypt, have adopted strategies and policies aimed at addressing poverty and improving the living standards of their citizens. They have also embarked on sound macroeconomic policies and carried out reforms in their tax codes and legislation. Yet they continue to face challenges that hinder their ability to achieve tangible results. Those challenges include the policy space available to them and their need to enhance their capacity to participate in international economic and financial systems and make their voices heard so as to improve their ability to design and implement development policies and to invest the maximum in the international and domestic means available for the eradication of poverty and the elimination of disease.

Some African countries have made progress, as shown by positive indictors. However, the real problem remains the lack of sufficient funding due to the non-fulfilment by developed countries of their financial obligations, given that most official development assistance (ODA) is used for debt cancellation. Consequently, they are not obliged to generate new monetary flows for prompt use in development. Yet, it is of great importance to double the resources allocated to achieving the MDGs, given the inadequacy of domestic resources in developing countries. In this context, direct foreign investment complements aid as a source of external financing for development,

especially for the transfer of modern technology, production techniques, improved management, worker training, and so forth.

In our view, the fundamental aim of this partnership is to work gradually to change the nature of the relationship between developing and developed countries from a donor-recipient relationship, based mainly on receiving grants and aid with all the associated restrictions and conditions, to a new relationship. The new relationship would allow developing countries to achieve economic growth at a rapid rate, enabling them to become full partners with the developed countries in an international economic environment based on equality, common interests and participation, thereby ensuring their continued efforts towards sustainable development.

Despite the negative effects of the successive economic crises and the subsequent decline in the rate of assistance at the global level, the Egyptian Government has worked steadily towards achieving the MDGs, and there is time for further progress in the next five years. Egypt has indeed come a long way in implementing ambitious political reforms, along with a development plan consisting of economic and social reforms aimed not only at accelerating implementation of the MDGs but also at raising the standard of living of its citizens and achieving sustainable development in the long term.

In this area, Egypt has implemented, within available resources, an ambitious economic reform plan effectively tackling the problems ailing society, including reform of the legislative and institutional infrastructure, in order to help create an attractive environment for foreign investment.

Regarding social issues, Egypt has put the welfare of the child at the heart of its social and economic development. To this end, Egypt is working with United Nations agencies and organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations on improving children's well-being and health. It is placing emphasis on the improvement of school nutrition and the development of ambitious initiatives in this area, as well as the implementation of many other integrated programmes in the fields of literacy, educational quality, gender opportunity, health care, and social and child protection. In this context, as part of its regional efforts and in cooperation with the United Nations World Food Programme, Egypt, under the patronage of its First Lady, will host a regional forum on 21-22 February 2011 at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, on the power of nutrition and school meals to transform the lives of children and enable them to reach their potential.

Furthermore, Egypt has made considerable progress towards achieving MDGs 4 and 5 through its success in reducing child and maternal mortality by 73 per cent and 68 per cent respectively. We look forward to accomplishing these two MDGs in full by 2015.

At the same time as the launch of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Egypt has taken many positive steps towards improving women's participation in political decision-making, including the introduction of a constitutional amendment sanctioning the allocation of 64 additional seats for women in Parliament. We have also established many councils and a coherent institutional structure to further the empowerment of women, so that they may contribute actively and fully to advancing society's progress on all fronts, political, economic and social.

We strongly believe in the important role of South-South cooperation, which aims at promoting efforts by developing countries to achieve the MDGs. Through the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa, Egypt helps many African countries in capacity-building, especially in the areas of health, agricultural development and education, by providing them with Egyptian experts to strengthen their institutions, as well as granting scholarships and organizing training courses and workshops for African citizens, and by cooperating with international and institutions and donor countries.

In conclusion, Egypt wishes to see a new international consensus going forward beyond 2015 that takes into account the interests of middle-income countries, since most MDGs aim at very basic humanitarian needs and most assistance now goes to low-income and heavily indebted countries. We are confident that a more comprehensive view of development will lead to the achievement of all our goals.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Janine Coye-Felson, chair of the delegation of Belize.

Mrs. Coye-Felson (Belize): Let me first salute the Co-Chairs and everyone else for their endurance on this very long day.

Twenty-nine years ago to this very day, Belize became an independent country. I was a child then and for me, as for every other child of that time, the concept of independence was foreign. For our parents, independence meant freedom and the opportunity for their children to be the authors of their future through the establishment of democratic institutions representing and reflecting the voice of the people.

Indeed, until children reach adulthood, we — as parents, as citizens of the global community, as political actors — bear responsibility for their future. Each and every one of us becomes a caretaker, ensuring that our children have the basic necessities of life. We must provide them with a decent standard of living, education, a healthy environment, and security, to allow them to realize their full potential. Their future is dependent on what we do now. And at present we run the risk of squandering that future.

A child orphaned by disease or disaster, unprotected by the State, does not go to school. A child crippled by hunger or maimed by war cannot go to school. For every child who is forced into the fields or industry, for every child who is forced to pick up a gun and not a book, we have forsaken their future and in so doing we have forsaken our own. Study after study reinforces this reality — that a path to development rests with investment in our children and their mothers. A healthy mother begets a healthy child. An educated mother is empowered to better provide a nurturing environment that begets opportunities for her child. A healthy, educated mother and child embody potential not only of their own but for their community and their economy. Investment in our children and women will break the cycle of poverty.

But this accepted wisdom is not accepted practice. Progress towards the reduction of maternal mortality is the slowest among the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gender gaps are pervasive throughout the world. Women suffer from violence, a lack of basic rights, and a lack of access to education, health care, technology and income. Gender discrimination is a universal cultural blight that entrenches the gulf between the haves and have-nots of this world.

In the words of a young mother, widowed by the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti and left her destitute in a camp, we must do something. Her cry of desperation echoes throughout the world. It is the cry of every woman who finds herself similarly marginalized and forlorn. But they cannot stand here before you and make that plea. It behooves us, then, as their representatives, to heed that clarion call.

Belize applauds and welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General in launching the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health. We also call upon the global private sector to partner in this initiative. If they cannot be prompted to act by the weight of moral suasion, then perhaps they should consider the weight of economic advantage. Investing in female empowerment translates into increased productivity, improved quality, and wider profit margins as a result of an expanded consumer base.

Government and civil society have long shouldered the responsibility for the empowerment of women and the plight of our children. It is time for those who depend on our mothers' labour and that of their progeny to share in that responsibility. Together we can do something. Together we can make a difference.

In the early morning of 12 September, only a few days after Belizeans celebrated a day when our forefathers emerged victorious in the Battle of St. George's Caye — a defining moment for our nationhood and sovereignty — another battle was waged in an impoverished neighbourhood in Belize City. It ended in the death of an eight-year-old girl deep in slumber. One would expect that such a loss would have inspired murderous rage. Instead that child's mother spoke with absolute resolve and complete faith that her daughter's death would be avenged in justice. Her expectations are no different from those of the young mother in Haiti, as we hear in her quiet words that plead for something to be done.

We as a nation, Belize and her people, affirm our determination to recapture the potential of now, so that our children's generation and the generations beyond are enabled to define their future. In the words of our national prayer, we thus resolve that "all our endeavours tend to peace, social justice, liberty, national happiness, the increase of industry, sobriety and useful knowledge".

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Henry Leonard Mac-Donald, chair of the delegation of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname): In taking a closer look at the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we have to conclude that there is nothing extraordinary about them but that they are merely reminders of simple human needs and basic rights that every individual around the world should be able to enjoy: freedom from extreme poverty and hunger, quality education, productive and decent employment, equality between women and men, good health and shelter, the right of women to give birth without risking their lives, and a sustainable living environment.

In cooperation with the national MDG Steering Committee, which is a national network of governmental and non-State actors responsible for monitoring the implementation of MDGs in Suriname, the Government of Suriname produced its second MDG progress report in 2009. It indicates that remarkable progress has been made towards the achievement of the Goals. Of significance is the success story whereby the total number of diagnosed cases of malaria in Suriname was reduced by 90 per cent from 2001 to 2008 and the malaria mortality rate was reduced to zero from 2005 to 2008.

But the report also notes that there have been setbacks and that there are still a number of challenges in areas such as school enrolment in the hinterland, sustainable employment for young people, better access for pregnant women to health care, birth control and essential medicine, and ensuring a sustainable living environment.

Suriname stands firm in its commitment to achieve the MDGs by 2015. The inaugural speech of our newly elected President, His Excellency Desiré Delano Bouterse, and the recent coalition manifesto that will guide our policies for the coming years have set out many aspirations and objectives to deal with the concerns stated earlier and whose realization will lead to the achievement of the MDGs in Suriname.

Many developing countries have made significant progress. However, it is clear that improvements in the lives of the poor have been unacceptably slow and that the hard-won gains are being threatened by the climate, food, and economic and financial crises and by persistent disparities and inequalities among and within nations. Further, the acceleration of progress over the next five years will need to focus on continuing the proven strategies, policies and interventions and on making a radical break with those that do not work.

With 90 per cent of its total land area forested, Suriname ranks extremely high in the world as a high-forest low-deforestation country. As we speak, our forests are making significant contributions to the global community in terms of biodiversity conservation and mitigation of climate change. Although we prefer to keep our forest standing in order to continue providing those and other ecosystem services to the global community, we are concerned about doing that at the cost of the sustainable development of our people. In that light, we are ready to welcome with appreciation the support of members of this Assembly who would be willing to stand with us and to support us in this endeavour through provision of such resources as finance, technology and capacity support.

In our view, the realization of the MDGs requires a collective approach integrating national, regional and international cooperation, which will also benefit various crucial developments in the world such as international peace and security, sustainable development and economic integration, including through fair trade. In that regard, the achievement of Goal 8, on global partnerships, still remains a challenge — specifically since efforts to step up official development assistance (ODA) have been set back and its volume, quality and predictability continue to be far lower than the agreed levels. We again underline the need for greater political commitment on the part of all donors. Such political commitments should be reflected in ODA timetables and would enable predictable and timely availability to meet the MDGs, as we have agreed internationally.

This last point is of further concern given that, according to the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/665), the world possesses the resources and knowledge to ensure that even the poorest countries, and others held back by disease, geographic isolation or civil strife, can be empowered to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Here again we take the opportunity to support the concept that economic and social development is the centerpiece of the objectives and operational activities of the United Nations.

Allow me to highlight the issue of the emerging health crisis caused by the increasing incidence and

prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Such diseases account for more than half of all deaths worldwide and significantly reduce life expectancy, quality of life and productivity. Although non-communicable diseases are currently not included in the indicators for assessing progress on the achievement of the MDGs, they undoubtedly have a negative impact. The poorest people, who are among the most vulnerable to those diseases, have the least access to health interventions, which ultimately drives them further into poverty and deprivation. We therefore strongly support the call for integrating relevant indicators into the MDG monitoring and evaluation system.

In conclusion, Suriname reiterates its commitments to realize sustainable development and to achieve the MDGs by the target date of 2015, as well as our readiness to join the international community and partners in complementing national efforts and accelerating actions in the relevant framework of the development activities of the United Nations system.

In the spirit of solidarity in international cooperation, Suriname is also strongly in favour of South-South and triangular cooperation as a means of enhancing the cross-fertilization of best practices, knowledge sharing and capacity-building among developing countries. Our experience with the success in eradicating malaria mortality in Suriname is testimony of the fact that Goals are achievable when nationally owned development strategies, policies and programmes are supported by international development partners.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dalius Čekuolis, chair of the delegation of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania): I would like to make a statement on behalf of Mr. Audronius Ažubalis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania.

Ten years since the Millennium Summit, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remains uneven, both in terms of geography and the level of progress on specific goals. Challenges both old and new threaten to slow down and even reverse the progress achieved so far. This High-level Meeting offers an excellent occasion for us all to renew and refocus the commitments we made 10 years ago.

Development cooperation is in the natural interest of all countries — big and small, recipients and donors — since persistent poverty, underdevelopment and neglect of basic human rights provide a fertile ground for extremism and radicalization and add to the problems of illegal migration, human trafficking, transborder crime and a variety of other complex problems that affect us all. Those problems cannot be resolved by any one country alone.

As responsible democratic Governments, we must first and foremost respond to the worries and concerns of our citizens affected by the recent economic slowdown by doing everything in our power to enable financial recovery and to set our national economies back on track. At the same time, we must live up to existing development commitments and pledges and make sure that the implementation of the MDGs is kept on track.

Importantly, development cooperation pays back as countries emerge from poverty and instability, creating a safer environment for trade, investment and business opportunities for all. However, development funds are not limitless, and references to donor fatigue are increasingly common.

As we move towards 2015, we need make sure that not one penny of development money is wasted, that development efforts are more coherent and more effectively coordinated and that duplication and wasteful practices are avoided. We believe that further efforts to ensure system-wide coherence are highly pertinent in that regard. My country will continue to support them.

Mutual accountability, aid effectiveness, targeted results-oriented investment of development funds and the mobilization of domestic policies and resources are key to progress in achieving the MDGs. Lithuania welcomes the proposal by European Union (EU) Commissioner Piebalgs regarding the MDG initiative that provides for a part of the reserves of the tenth European Development Fund to be used to increase EU support to African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in their efforts to reach the MDGs. We believe that initiative is a right step towards increasing aid effectiveness.

Speaking from our own experience, Lithuania underlines the importance for MDG implementation of good governance at all levels and of solid democratic institutions responsive to the needs of people, based on

the key principles of participation, accountability and transparency. Countries with recent reform experience, such as Lithuania, can assist developing nations in their efforts to reform tax and administration systems in order to increase revenue and mobilize domestic resources along with external aid for sustainable development and the achievement of the MDGs.

After restoring independence 20 years ago, Lithuania moved quickly from a recipient to a donor country. In the past five years alone, Lithuania's official development assistance (ODA) increased four-fold. In line with overall EU commitments, Lithuania is working to meet the ODA target of 0.33 per cent of gross national income by 2015. Lithuania's development cooperation focuses on areas where we have a comparative advantage that arises from our own State-building experience, namely, good governance and democratic reform, the rule of law and building a functioning market economy, sustainable development and education.

In terms of development partners, we started out by focusing on a relatively small number of countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. Today, Lithuania's development cooperation is reaching out to more distant regions, from Afghanistan to the Middle East.

In Afghanistan, where Lithuania leads a provincial reconstruction team in the province of Ghor, we have focused on Goal 2 by providing training for teachers, supporting and promoting primary education, building schools and supplying necessary teaching material. We also carried out a number of programmes related to Goals 4 and 5, such as those on the vaccination of children and women of child-bearing age and on providing health-care services and supplementary nutrition for pregnant women. In that context, we welcome the joint action plan for women's and children's health initiated by the Secretary General. We look forward to more active involvement by the United Nations and multilateral donors in the Ghor province of Afghanistan.

Let me now turn briefly to women and development. Empowerment of women and their full participation at all levels of economic, political and social life are key to poverty reduction, economic recovery and prosperity and to the full enjoyment of all human rights by all.

We cannot expect substantial progress on the MDGs globally if women are left out or treated as second-class citizens. Full participation by women is also essential to building vibrant and durable democracies around the world. Educating girls and women and promoting women's access to full employment, decent work and working conditions and to credit and resources have a natural multiplier effect on the entire economy, and thus on overall progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We therefore support further mainstreaming of the gender perspective in both national and multilateral development policies and projects. Also in that context, we welcome the recent creation of UN Women — the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. We hope it will be a powerful instrument in supporting development progress worldwide.

The meeting rose at 9.40 p.m.

United Nations

A/65/PV.7

General Assembly

Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

7th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 22 September 2010, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

High-level plenary meeting as a contribution to the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity

Agenda item 20

Sustainable development

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity

The President (*spoke in French*): I declare open the one-day high-level plenary meeting as a contribution to the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, held in accordance with resolution 64/203 of 21 December 2009 and decisions 64/555 of 15 April 2010 and 64/567 of 13 September 2010.

Biodiversity is at the very heart of life. In declaring 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity, the General Assembly launched an appeal to celebrate life on Earth and the value of biodiversity. The International Year of Biodiversity is an invitation to act this year and in the years to come to safeguard the biodiversity of life on Earth. I am very pleased that, at this beginning of the sixty-fifth session, we are holding a meeting of the General Assembly as a contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity, and I welcome everyone most sincerely.

Throughout time, biodiversity has been essential to human existence, but it is often difficult to grasp its importance, and particularly of the risks run by losing it. And yet, we are nourished by plants and animals, and insects carry out pollination and are an essential link in the food chain. Rain water becomes drinking water due to a process of filtering through the soil. The oxygen that we breathe is the product of the photosynthesis of algae and green plants.

Today, biodiversity is declining throughout the world, and humankind's activities are to a large extent responsible. Climate change is further worsening the problem. Moreover, the deterioration of many vital services rendered by ecosystems jeopardizes the progress accomplished towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, while we are all threatened by a decline in biodiversity, the consequences will be even more onerous for the poorest among us. Many areas rich in biodiversity are in developing countries, the people of which are particularly dependent on agriculture, fishing and forestry for their subsistence.

It is heartening to note that the international community is mobilizing to deal with this threat. The adoption in 2002 of the 2010 biodiversity target was an important milestone. That target, which was also incorporated into the Millennium Development Goal on environment, has not been achieved, but many States that have been inspired by it to take specific measures to protect biodiversity. Furthermore, myriad initiatives are aimed at better reconciling biodiversity and economics and at assessing the economic value of services provided by ecosystems.

A better awareness of the cost of the loss of biodiversity is essential if our actions to protect biodiversity are to be more effective. It is essential for companies to understand the benefits of biodiversity

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and move towards modes of production that are more environmentally friendly and towards a green economy. We need to persevere in our efforts.

Quite recently, last June in Busan in the Republic of Korea, the international community decided to establish an intergovernmental science-policy platform aimed at filling the gap between scientific knowledge on the deterioration of the natural environment and the actions of Governments. That was a major breakthrough towards organizing a consistent and effective multilateral response to the loss of biodiversity. Next month in Nagoya, Japan, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity will be held. A new strategic plan for the Convention will be adopted there. It is my hope that our discussions today at this high-level meeting will make a useful contribution to the negotiations to be undertaken in Nagoya in order to ensure that the new plan will be exhaustive, ambitious and feasible.

Preserving biodiversity is inseparable from the fight against poverty, improving health, prosperity and security of present and future generations, as well as from the fight against climate change. Preserving biodiversity is not a luxury; it is a duty.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I commend the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting. Conserving the planet's species and habitats, and the goods and services they provide, is central to sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals. This year is not only the International Year of Biodiversity; it is also the deadline by which the international community had pledged to substantially reduce the rate of biodiversity loss. The 2010 target will not be met. Indeed, as we see from the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook, issued by the Convention on Biological Diversity, the global decline in biodiversity is accelerating. Science tells us that our actions have pushed extinctions up to 1,000 times the natural background rate.

The reason is simple: human activities — yours, mine and everyone's. The main causes include deforestation, changes in habitat and land degradation. The growing impact of climate change is compounding the problem.

As with most emergencies, those hardest hit are the poor. We have all heard of the web of life. The way we live threatens to trap us in a web of death. Too many people still fail to grasp the implications of this destruction. They do not see why we need to preserve an obscure frog here or an endangered owl there. Many still think that the Earth is ours to use as we like.

This argument betrays a woeful ignorance of the importance of ecosystems to our well-being as a species, to climate regulation, to water supplies and to food security. In this International Year, we need to demonstrate the concrete benefits of investing in biodiversity. Ecosystem services are directly linked to the bottom line. They are our natural capital. We need to show that protecting ecosystems can help us achieve the Millennium Development Goals and build resilience to climate change.

All over the world, ecosystem services are a massive undervalued subsidy provided by the environment. When we lose these services through mismanagement, crops fail, profits drop, people become poorer and economies suffer. Let us think of the human cost of deforestation in countries such as Haiti and Ethiopia or the dust-bowl in this country in the 1930s.

Last year's financial crisis was a wake-up call to Governments on the perils of failing to oversee and regulate complex relationships that affect us all. The biodiversity crisis is no different. We are bankrupting our natural economy. We need to fashion a rescue package before it is too late.

Next month, 193 parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will meet in Nagoya, Japan. They will adopt a new strategic plan on biodiversity and a 2050 biodiversity vision. This overarching international biodiversity framework is the result of a comprehensive and inclusive two-year process. It calls for concrete national targets before the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development 2012, the engagement of all stake-holders and the inclusion of biodiversity considerations across all sectors of our society. It includes the means of implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. It will address the important issues of access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from them.

It is a solid plan on paper, but it will need leadership to bring it to life, not just from

environmental ministers but from finance and planning ministers, economic production and transport ministers, and health and social welfare ministers. Moreover, we must stop thinking of environmental protection as a cost. It is an investment that goes hand in hand with the other investments that heads of State and Government must make to consolidate economic growth and human well-being in their countries. Maintaining and restoring our natural infrastructure can provide economic gains worth trillions of dollars each year. Allowing it to decline is like throwing money out of the window.

I urge all leaders present today to commit to reducing biodiversity loss. That will be their legacy and their gift to generations to come.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Alsaidi, Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations.

Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen): I have the distinct honour and privilege to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

This is the first time in the history of the United Nations that the issue of biodiversity is being addressed at the level of heads of State and Government. Our meeting today provides not only a unique opportunity to highlight the challenges we face, but also the opportunity that managing the resources of biodiversity offers, in particular as it relates to eradicating poverty and improving the livelihood of millions of people. Biodiversity is a key element of development.

As the natural wealth of the poor, biodiversity is critical to developing countries. The poorest and most vulnerable in developing countries depend on biodiversity for a range of services — from health and nutrition to serving as a safety-net when faced with climate variability and natural disaster — and even for their livelihoods. At the same time, developing countries are a treasure trove of biodiversity and home to some of the rarest and most unique species that in turn hold valuable genetic resources. Today, species are disappearing at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate of extinction, undermining nature's ability to provide us with the good services we so greatly depend on.

It is the poor of the world who will suffer the most if we do not stop the loss of our biological resources, since the poor depend disproportionately on biodiversity for their day-to-day livelihoods. Continued biodiversity loss, including through unsustainable use, threatens to increase poverty and undermine development. Biodiversity can no longer be seen as an issue separate from efforts to tackle poverty and improve the health, wealth and security of present and future generations. This can happen only if we finally give biodiversity the priority it deserves.

Now more than ever, the Group of 77 and China calls for the urgent implementation of the three objectives of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in a mutually supportive manner. Indeed, the conservation of biological diversity cannot be achieved without the sustainable use and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from genetic resources. Not only are all three pillars of the Convention important to the development of developing countries, but they also provide important tools in our fight against poverty. To that end, an effective international framework must be in place to ensure enhanced implementation of the three objectives of the main multilateral instrument on this matter, the Convention on Biological Diversity. These objectives are conservation, the sustainable use, and the fair, equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of biodiversity.

We must strengthen global partnerships and international commitment to ensure that owners of biodiversity resources and the traditional knowledge associated with them, which are mainly the developing countries, receive the benefits arising from the use of those resources. Furthermore, developing countries will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals without addressing, along with the developed countries, the international threat to biodiversity, in particular the misappropriation of genetic resources and biopiracy.

To this end, the adoption of the protocol on access and benefit sharing at the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held next month in Nagoya, Japan, is of strategic importance. The adoption of the protocol will be key to the success of the new biodiversity strategic plan for 2011-2020 to be adopted in Nagoya. This new biodiversity vision for 2050 and

the 2020 biodiversity target require the urgent mobilization of new and additional financial resources.

The success of the Aichi Nagoya summit will be the best gift to this year's celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity and a good omen for the success of the United Nations decade on biodiversity. However, the challenges of the continued loss of biodiversity, compounded by climate change, require the full engagement of all stakeholders, as well as the active engagement of all Governments without exception. The Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate its call on the sole remaining country that has yet to accede to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity to do so as soon as possible. Indeed, universal participation in the Convention on life on Earth is an idea whose time has indeed come.

The Convention on Biological Diversity will hold its tenth Conference of the Parties in Nagoya next October. The Group of 77 and China takes this opportunity to underscore the need for great mobilization and political will so that we will be able to adopt the protocol on access and benefit sharing and ensure that the post-2010 targets are able to be met through new, additional and sufficient financial resources and the transfer of technology to developing countries.

At the Nagoya Conference, parties are expected to boost the implementation of the Convention. The success of our ongoing commitment to the cause of biodiversity will rest upon ensuring a balanced and effective outcome in Nagoya that will provide the tools for addressing the challenges facing biodiversity. In this regard, agreement in two broad areas — the successful conclusion of negotiations on the protocol on access and benefit sharing, and the successful conclusion of the discussion on the post-2010 strategic plan of the Convention and a resource mobilization strategy — is key to leading to a successful implementation of the Convention. The level of ambition in establishing targets for reducing biodiversity loss in this plan should be matched by equal targets for the means to implement such commitments.

The Group of 77 and China is committed to finalizing the draft multi-year plan of action for South-South cooperation on biodiversity for development, as mandated by the ninth Conference of Parties, and calls on all parties to demonstrate commitment and support for its adoption at the tenth meeting of the Parties to the Convention. In this context, we welcome the convening of the First South-South Cooperation Forum on Biodiversity for Development to be held in Nagoya, Japan, on 17 October 2010. We also express our appreciation to the Convention secretariat for establishing a strategic partnership with the Group of 77 and for its support in elaborating the multi-year plan of action, which provides a unique opportunity to enhance the solidarity and global cohesion of the Group in support of the new biodiversity strategy.

More than ever, the establishment of a global alliance for protecting life on Earth is required. This unique event offers us a unique opportunity as leaders of the world to provide leadership and to lead by example for the benefit of life on Earth. The Group of 77 and China is fully committed to playing its role and calls on its partners, as well as the United Nations system, to support the new biodiversity strategy for the next decade so as to ensure that our children will continue to benefit from the vital services provided by our planet.

Finally, the Group of 77 and China looks forward to the successful outcome of the Nagoya meeting and reiterates that the post-2010 strategic plan, along with a strategy for resource mobilization and a new international regime on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from their use, are indivisible components of an improved global policy framework for biodiversity policy that conserves biodiversity, uses its components sustainably, and ensures that the benefits from the use of the genetic resources of our planet are shared equitably.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Izabella Teixeira, Minister of the Environment of Brazil.

Ms. Teixeira (Brazil): In 2006, Brazil hosted the eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. For us, that initiative was steeped in political and symbolic meaning, given the enormous responsibility Brazil has towards biodiversity. As a megadiverse country, Brazil is aware of the strategic value of biodiversity and of the attention and urgency we should dedicate to it. Most scientists, politicians, business people and civil society understand the role of biodiversity as the basis for sustainability. For no other purpose did the General Assembly adopt resolution

62/203, declaring 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity, and for no other reason do we meet here today.

This is definitely the time to transform our words and political discussions into action. We should pave the way for a more sustainable society, since what we have at present is quite a disturbing picture. We have been unable to reduce the rate or speed of the loss of biodiversity, as called for in the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Not only has there been an absence of relevant signs of a reduction in biodiversity loss, but indicators portray a growing deterioration of biodiversity worldwide.

One of the key messages of the 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was that, over the past century, certain economic sectors have benefited from the conversion of natural ecosystems and the exploitation of biodiversity. But these gains have been achieved at the cost of increasing losses to biodiversity, the degradation of ecosystem services, and an increase in and spread of poverty. We need strong and determined responses and political will to change this scenario, in particular in the run-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development 2012. The conservation and sustainable use of biological resources are crucial not only to ensuring continued benefits to local and indigenous communities, but also to creating opportunities for sustainable development and poverty eradication for all.

Brazil is doing its part. According to the latest edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook, Brazil is one of the few countries to have contributed to clearing up this picture. Under President Lula's leadership, Brazil has achieved significant results. We have created the greatest number of new protected areas in recent years and have managed to reduce to historical lows deforestation rates in the Amazon region. But much remains to be done.

I should highlight the important outcome we reached in South Korea for the establishment of the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. By creating adequate links between science, policymaking and capacity-building through the provision of credible and relevant information on biodiversity ecosystem services, the platform will improve our understanding of the need for immediate action against the loss of biodiversity, as well as of the consequences of inaction.

The lasting success of our efforts will rest on decisions to be taken at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya. We have been negotiating a protocol on access and benefit sharing that will be fundamental to overcoming the implementation deficit of the Convention and to combating biopiracy. We have been discussing a new strategic plan for the period post-2010 and a new strategy for resource mobilization. A central part of our future efforts must include support for national agendas to reach targets on biodiversity, ensuring country ownership and supported by predictable, additional and sufficient resources and technology. These three elements — the protocol on access and benefit sharing, the strategic plan and the new strategy for resource mobilization — are part of an indivisible package for the tenth meeting of the Conference. They should be considered, discussed and negotiated with the attention and urgency that the matter deserves.

If there is one reason for discussing the issue of biodiversity at a high level, as we are doing here today, it should be to rescue the spirit of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which led to such significant results as the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity. I call on all to renew that same sentiment of commitment, political will, and ethical-moral responsibility for the well-being of current and future generations.

We need a deal in Nagoya. The news from Montreal was a sign that we are quite far from a deal. Some countries are not fully committed to an agreement on access and benefit sharing. At this high-level meeting, we should raise the profile of biodiversity and galvanize the political will and engagement of all countries in support of this call for action.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Norbert Roettgen, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany.

Mr. Roettgen (Germany): In this International Year of Biodiversity, the loss of species and habitats is continuing at a dramatic pace. Second by second, minute by minute, we are destroying the natural foundations of our lives. During the time of my speech alone, the equivalent of 170 football fields will have been deforested. More than 900 tons of fish will have

been taken from the world's oceans. One more species might even have vanished from our planet forever.

And we let it happen. We let it happen even though we value these plants and animals as part of our world, and even though we know that biological diversity is vital to feeding humans. Biological diversity is the foundation of our very own survival. Every day, without a second thought, we use numerous services provided by nature and thus by biodiversity — clean air and water, fertile soils, pollinating insects, natural coastal protection, and carbon dioxide storage in forests, wetlands, soils and the seas. Conserving biological diversity is not a luxury; it is a necessary insurance and an investment in our future and our lives.

The conservation of biological diversity does not yet receive the same amount of attention as the issue of climate change, but attention is a precondition for political action. Conserving biological diversity worldwide requires committed and long-term action. And it requires cooperation among the international community.

At today's high-level meeting, let us send a signal and make a global pact for biological diversity. Let us do so by recognizing the value of biological diversity for human well-being and for the global economy and by integrating it into our economic policies, instruments and accounting; by massively reducing our ecological footprint and restructuring production, trade and consumption; by making greater use of biological diversity as a basis for sustainable innovations, and ensuring equitable sharing of the benefits resulting from the use of genetic resources; by strengthening the global network of protected areas, especially those at sea, to give nature the space to retreat; by improving the knowledge of biological diversity and making it available to political decision-makers in a suitable form; and, not least, by strengthening the financial foundations for tackling these challenges at the national and international levels.

In the framework of our presidency of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, we have striven together with all our partners actively to promote this process. Most recently in Geneva, in an unprecedented meeting with the previous and future presidencies of the Conference of the Parties, we adopted a call for action addressed to the participants here today. In the spirit of that call for action, let us lay the foundations here in New York and at the upcoming tenth meeting Conference of the Parties to halt the loss of biological diversity in the coming decade. Let us follow the path of biodiversity — a path lined with forests and oceans and the most diverse and vibrant life forms our planet has to offer for our joy and for our children's survival.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Seiji Maehara, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Mr. Maehara (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): On the occasion of this important meeting today, I express my heartfelt appreciation to you, Sir, for your leadership.

At present many species on Earth, which has sustained life for more than four billion years, are dying out and biodiversity is being lost at an unprecedented rate. Currently, swathes of forest equivalent to one-third of the area of Japan are vanishing from Earth every year. If the destruction of the ecosystem continues at this pace, in the near future mankind could lose most of nature's bounty for all eternity. If that should happen, we will not be able to pass on the blessings of nature to future generations. As this year marks the International Year of Biodiversity, we should understand that the loss of biodiversity has been caused by none other than human activities. We now need to be aware that we must take new action and change our behaviour so as to halt this loss.

In October, Japan will host the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya city, Aichi prefecture, aimed at achieving a global agreement on launching new actions. One of the main objectives of the Conference is to set global targets for 2020 and 2050 as common guidelines for formulating national strategies. It is important that we paint a clear picture of the concerted action to be taken over the next 10 years so that coming generations will be able to enjoy the blessings of nature.

At the tenth meeting of the Conference, we will also negotiate with a view to reaching agreement on a new international regime in the area of access and benefit sharing as related to genetic resources, as well as on international rules with regard to living modified organisms. In particular, negotiations on access and

benefit sharing could be affected by the differing interests of the users and suppliers of genetic resources. However, if the parties can agree on a new regime, it could be an epoch-making agreement to facilitate the flow of funds for habitat conservation, and thus contribute to the benefit of the entire planet. Japan will do its utmost as Chair to ensure that agreements are reached on these issues at the meeting, and we request the support of all parties concerned.

Japan will contribute to global efforts, acting on its own innovative initiative. First, Japan proposes the adoption of a resolution on a United Nations decade of biodiversity at this session of the General Assembly. The resolution would call for the promotion of concerted action over the next 10 years, not only within the framework of the Convention, but also throughout the entire United Nations system. Japan will also strive for the adoption at this session of a resolution on the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Once established, the platform is expected to provide a scientific basis for biodiversity conservation policies and to lead to a broad understanding of the importance of such policies.

Japan will also lead international efforts in promoting conservation and the sustainable use of the natural environment in regions that have been created through such human activities as agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Japan will propose this approach, which we refer to as the Satoyama initiative, at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, with a view to enabling the experiences and practices developed in different regions of the world to be shared internationally. Japan will put to good use its expertise and experience in supporting other countries.

In addition, Japan intends to propose assistance measures to support developing countries in the steady formulation and implementation of national strategies, if a global common target is agreed upon at meeting of the Conference. In consultation with other countries, Japan will consider appropriate measures that will exploit its knowledge and technologies.

Japan has long valued living in harmony with nature through the ingenious utilization of nature's abundant gifts in our daily lives and activities. As the Earth and humankind are in crisis caused by the loss of biodiversity, we are urged to address the root cause by making our lifestyles and behaviour more harmonious with nature. By taking advantage of our experience in living with nature, Japan is committed to being at the forefront of the global action to be initiated at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. I looking forward to seeing all present here again and to engaging in discussions with them at that meeting, which will be held under the theme "Living in harmony with nature".

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Barroso (European Union): On behalf of the European Union, I have the honour to speak today in this meeting, which is a very important, unique and welcome opportunity to celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity. It is also perhaps one of the last opportunities to exchange views before the Nagoya meeting, at which important decisions will be taken to set the course of global biodiversity policy and action for the next decade.

It is significant that our meeting today should coincide with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) summit. Biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides cut across many of the MDGs, and not just one. Our ability to end poverty and hunger and improve child and maternal health depends on the long-term availability of the fresh water, food, medicine and raw materials that nature provides. This comprehensive and holistic approach makes it also clear that the €1-billion MDG initiative I announced here two days ago can also benefit biodiversity. It is also clear that we will not be able to mitigate climate change or adapt to its impacts, or to prevent desertification and land degradation, if we do not protect our ecosystems and biodiversity. And yet, despite these interlinkages, we have collectively failed to reach our 2010 biodiversity target. Instead, we continue to lose biodiversity worldwide at an unprecedented rate.

We are standing at a crossroads. Either we take concerted action to reverse biodiversity loss as soon as possible, or we compromise our own future and that of generations not yet born. Nagoya is our chance to turn the situation around. It is our chance to make decisions that will strengthen the implementation of the Convention's three key objectives.

First, it is important that we adopt a new and effective strategic plan that encourages collective action and is supported by all those who use biodiversity and whose activities have an impact on it. This plan must be sufficiently ambitious to force all parties to the Convention to raise their game, to tackle the key drivers of biodiversity loss, and to prevent ecological tipping points from being reached.

Secondly, it is important that we finally conclude negotiations on the protocol on access and benefit sharing, as we have pledged to do on several occasions. The protocol should ensure transparency, legal certainty and predictability for those seeking access to genetic resources, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from them. I am reassured by the spirit of collaboration and partnership exhibited during the negotiations in Montreal in recent days. However, hard work is still ahead of us if we are to find answers to the unresolved questions. Agreeing on a meaningful protocol will require the full political commitment of all parties and the willingness to compromise.

Thirdly, it is important that we agree on how best to build capacity and mobilize resources — scientific, technological, human and financial — to enable all parties to implement their commitments under the Convention. The European Union has committed, as part of its 2020 biodiversity target, to step up its contribution to averting global biodiversity loss. From 2002 to 2008, we provided more than $1 billion annually for global biodiversity. In addition, European Union member States contributed significantly to the recent replenishment of the Global Environment Facility, of which $1.2 billion is earmarked for biodiversity. That represents a 28 per cent increase compared to the last replenishment.

Of course, there are other ways beyond new and additional public finance to further enhance the implementation of our commitments under the Convention. We need to explore all options, including the reform, elimination and reorientation of subsidies harmful to biodiversity, and private funding such as payments for ecosystem services and other market-based instruments. The European Union is prepared to work together with all parties to improve and ensure long-term sustainable support for implementation. But it is also our view that this responsibility should be shared by all parties. Indeed, increased efforts are needed on the part of all of us to ensure that biodiversity objectives are given sufficient priority in Government plans and programmes.

The messages in the international study on the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity are clear. Valuing biodiversity and ecosystem services should come naturally. After all, investing in biodiversity is not a luxury; it is a sound investment that can bring multiple benefits.

Let me conclude by saying that the European Union welcomes the decision reached in the Republic of Korea last June on the need to establish an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. We look forward to a positive decision by the General Assembly before the end of the year on establishing this important platform in 2011.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker for this meeting.

Before adjourning this meeting, I remind representatives that the thematic panel "The way forward in achieving the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the internationally agreed biodiversity goals and targets" will take place, immediately following this plenary meeting, in Conference Room 2 of the North Lawn Building.

I wish all participants a most productive panel discussion.

The meeting rose at 10 a.m.